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LIFE AND LITERATURE

LIFE AND LITERATURE

BY

LAFCADIO HEARN

SELECTED AND EDITED WITH
AN INTRODUCTION BY

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INTRODUCTION

This volume contains a third selection from the lectures which Lafcadio Hearn delivered at the University of Tokyo between 1896 and 1902. An account of these lectures and of the remarkable student notes in which they were preserved, is given in the Introductions to the first selection, "Interpretations of Literature," 1915, and to the second selection, "Appreciations of Poetry," 1916. It should be said again, for the information of those who may read this present volume without acquaintance with the others, that Lafcadio Hearn lectured very slowly, choosing simple words and constructions, in order to make the foreign language as easy as possible to his Japanese students; and some of his students managed to take down many of his lectures word for word. From their notes—the only record we have of Lafcadio Hearn the teacher—the present volume, like its predecessors, is selected.

It is unnecessary to speak again of the service Lafcadio Hearn rendered to the West by his interpretations of Japan, nor of the service he rendered to the East in these lectures on Western literature. The editor would call attention once more, however, to the extraordinary quality of these lectures simply as literary criticism. Had they been addressed to an American audience, they would not have suggested, as they now do, the lonely and romantic adventure of Western culture in the Japanese classroom; but they would still have deserved our attention as one of the finest illustrations—certainly the illustration on the largest scale in English—of that kind of criticism which tries to interpret rather than to pass sentence. To be sure, a sympathetic explanation, in art as in life, may imply a verdict, but with Hearn the

implication remained secondary to the sympathy and the understanding. His attitude is the usual one among creative artists; it is in grateful contrast with both the academic and the journalistic schools of criticism today, which light up their verdicts with artificial emphasis, and leave sympathy and understanding—shall we say, imagination?—in subdued shadow. The present editor, therefore, does not expect all readers to agree with him now that these volumes of Lafcadio Hearn's are among the best examples of the soundest kind of criticism; but he hopes for a day when such praise will seem not extreme. The pigeon-holing type of criticism, having its central roots in mediocrity, is likely to survive the assaults of common sense, but its prestige is waning, and it may be forced to surrender the high place it has long usurped. Certainly the appreciation of literature has not prospered under the tradition which, having fixed a label on a book, would dispose of it like a jar of jam—all of one kind on the same shelf. When this tendency is benevolent, it enables a trained scholar to call each new novel by a generic name—for him it is a Henry James novel, or a Howells novel, or an Arnold Bennett novel; and similarly the habit of labelling books enables the journalistic critic at his best to recognize an O. Henry story or a Don Marquis poem. But the particular qualities of the work thus pigeonholed, neither the trained labeller nor the journalistic recognizer seems to be interested in. Moreover, the trained scholar and the journalistic critic are not always at their best; and at their worst—as in their clash over the new poetry in America today—their sentence-pronouncing habit degenerates into an orgy of scorn, in which the older readers pour disdain upon the wreckers and the experimenters, and the younger generation gesticulate contempt at the old fogies, and neither side furnishes a good reason for its prejudice. Is it rash to hope that common sense will at last persuade us to understand books—or at least to try to understand them—before we judge them? And if we once un-

derstand a great work of art, or even a minor work of art, shall we still think it so necessary to label the work great or minor?

Lafcadio Hearn says simply that the object of criticism is to find out why you like a book or why you dislike it; the good qualities of a book he defines in terms of its truth to life; and for an impartial index as to whether the book is true to life, he would accept the opinion of generations of men. No book entirely bad can, he thinks, become famous; unless men could recognize in it some experience of their own, they would not read it permanently. If the sceptic should say, This simple theory does well enough for books already famous, but how shall I judge a new book?—Hearn would answer that the study of famous books, where life is truly represented, helps us to recognize life itself, by developing in us a more sensitive memory, a livelier imagination, until we are quick to recognize truth to experience even in a new and unheralded work. The prosperity of a book, in short, lies not in its conformity to any outward tradition, but to its reflection of the reader's experience. Sound criticism is for Hearn identical with thoughtful reading; the art of reading or of criticism is simply the art of discriminating among one's experiences. Turning the idea about, Hearn would define literature—in so far as it is a fine art—as the best expression of the most intimate experiences. "In all my lectures," he says, "I have never failed, when I had the opportunity, to remind you that literature is not the art of writing books, but the art of expressing feeling—feeling, which means everything noble as well as everything common in human life." He is at pains to explain that by "feeling" he means emotion, not sensation.

This theory of criticism implies a large hospitality toward every kind of book, and Lafcadio Hearn was one of the most generous and most patient of readers. He could find the virtues even of the types of literature toward which his temperament did not dispose him, and though in his own

writing he was one of the most painstaking of artists, he could value the potential good even in books crudely expressed. The casual way in which these lectures were recorded, and the fact that he had no opportunity to revise them, will account for certain lapses of style, certain exaggerations of statement, such as his just taste would deplore. But these defects in the record do not impair the theory nor the spirit of these volumes. To one who has read them consecutively, the abiding impression is of a noble and continuous discrimination, a sustained sympathy, day after day, year after year, toward good books of all sorts, whether contemporary or long published.

A theory of life and of art so romantic as his, with such emphasis upon the possibilities of adventure, might have lent itself to shallowness or to impressionism, had it not been sustained in Lafcadio Hearn by a self-discipline almost beyond the rigour of classicism. Again and again he reminds us that the enjoyment of art, like the enjoyment of life, is itself an art; he never fails, when speaking of his beloved romantics, to show that their freedom was either an achievement or a failure; he has no use for the books which can be drained in one reading; he likes best poets like Meredith or Rossetti, whose crowded lines repay study. The note of discipline on every page of his lectures gives even his slighter moments an undertone of character, so that when he speaks specifically of the moral function of art, he seems not to introduce a new theme, but to put finally into words what we were waiting for him to say.

It remains only to add that in preparing this volume the editor tried, as in the other volumes, to verify all the quotations, dates, and allusions. If errors have escaped him, he must plead the condition of the manuscripts, which in these chapters were full of perplexities. In reading the proofs he has again had the kind assistance of Pay Director Mitchell McDonald, U. S. N., literary executor of Lafcadio Hearn —and his friend.

LIFE AND LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

ON READING IN RELATION TO LITERATURE

As the term approaches its close, I wish to keep my promise regarding a series of lectures relating to literary life and work, to be given independently of texts or authorities, and to represent, as far as possible, the results of practical experience among the makers of literature in different countries. The subject for this term will be Reading—apparently, perhaps, a very simple subject, but really not so simple as it looks, and much more important than you may think it. I shall begin this lecture by saying that very few persons know how to read. Considerable experience with literature is needed before taste and discrimination can possibly be acquired; and without these, it is almost impossible to learn how to read. I say *almost* impossible; since there are some rare men who, through a natural inborn taste, through a kind of inherited literary instinct, are able to read very well even before reaching the age of twenty-five years. But these are great exceptions, and I am speaking of the average.

For, to read the characters or the letters of the text does not mean reading in the true sense. You will often find yourselves reading words or characters automatically, even pronouncing them quite correctly, while your minds are occupied with a totally different subject. This mere mechanism of reading becomes altogether automatic at an early period of life, and can be performed irrespective of attention. Neither can I call it reading to extract the narrative portion of a text from the rest simply for one's personal amusement, or, in other words, to read a book "for the story." Yet most of the reading that is done in the world is done in exactly this way. Thousands and

thousands of books are bought every year, every month, I might even say every day, by people who do not read at all. They only think that they read. They buy books just to amuse themselves, "to kill time," as they call it; in one hour or two their eyes have passed over all the pages, and there is left in their minds a vague idea or two about what they have been looking at; and this they really believe is reading. Nothing is more common than to be asked, "Have you read such a book?" or to hear somebody say, "I have read such and such a book." But these persons do not speak seriously. Out of a thousand persons who say, "I have read this," or "I have read that," there is not one perhaps who is able to express any opinion worth hearing about what he has been reading. Many and many a time I hear students say that they have read certain books; but if I ask them some questions regarding the book, I find that they are not able to make any answer, or at best, they will only repeat something that somebody else has said about what they think that they have been reading. But this is not peculiar to students; it is in all countries the way that the great public devour books. And to conclude this introductory part of the lecture, I would say that the difference between the great critic and the common person is chiefly that the great critic knows how to read, and that the common person does not. No man is really able to read a book who is not able to express an original opinion regarding the contents of a book.

No doubt you will think that this statement of the case confuses reading with study. You might say, "When we read history or philosophy or science, then we do read very thoroughly, studying all the meanings and bearings of the text, slowly, and thinking about it. This is hard study. But when we read a story or a poem out of class-hour, we read for amusement. Amusement and study are two different things." I am not sure that you all think this; but young men generally do so think. As a matter

of fact, every book worth reading ought to be read in precisely the same way that a scientific book is read—not simply for amusement; and every book worth reading should have the same amount of value in it that a scientific book has, though the value may be of a totally different kind. For, after all, the good book of fiction or romance or poetry is a scientific work; it has been composed according to the best principles of more than one science, but especially according to the principles of the great science of life, the knowledge of human nature.

In regard to foreign books, this is especially true; but the advice suggested will be harder to follow, when we read in a language which is not our own. Nevertheless, how many Englishmen do you suppose really read a good book in English? how many Frenchmen read a great book in their own tongue? Probably not more than one in two thousand of those who think that they read. What is more, although there are now published every year in London upwards of six thousand books, at no time has there been so little good reading done by the average public as today. Books are written, sold, and read after a fashion —or rather according to the fashion. There is a fashion in literature as well as in everything else; and a particular kind of amusement being desired by the public, a particular kind of reading is given to supply the demand. So useless have become to this public the arts and graces of real literature, the great thoughts which should belong to a great book, that men of letters have almost ceased to produce true literature. When a man can obtain a great deal of money by writing a book without style or beauty, a mere narrative to amuse, and knows at the same time that if he should give three, five, or ten years to the production of a really good book, he would probably starve to death, he is forced to be untrue to the higher duties of his profession. Men happily situated in regard to money matters, might possibly attempt something great from time to

time; but they can hardly get a hearing. Taste is so much deteriorated within the past few years, that, as I told you before, style has practically disappeared—and style means thinking. And this state of things in England has been largely brought about by bad habits of reading, by not knowing how to read.

For the first thing which a scholar should bear in mind is that a book ought not to be read for mere amusement. Half-educated persons read for amusement, and are not to be blamed for it; they are incapable of appreciating the deeper qualities that belong to a really great literature. But a young man who has passed through a course of university training should discipline himself at an early day never to read for mere amusement. And once the habit of the discipline has been formed, he will even find it impossible to read for mere amusement. He will then impatiently throw down any book from which he cannot obtain intellectual food, any book which does not make an appeal to the higher emotions and to his intellect. But on the other hand, the habit of reading for amusement becomes with thousands of people exactly the same kind of habit as wine-drinking or opium-smoking; it is like a narcotic, something that helps to pass the time, something that keeps up a perpetual condition of dreaming, something that eventually results in destroying all capacity for thought, giving exercise only to the surface parts of the mind, and leaving the deeper springs of feeling and the higher faculties of perception unemployed.

Let us simply state what the facts are about this kind of reading. A young clerk, for example, reads every day on the way to his office and on the way back, just to pass the time; and what does he read? A novel, of course; it is very easy work, and it enables him to forget his troubles for a moment, to dull his mind to all the little worries of his daily routine. In one day or two days he finishes the novel; then he gets another. He reads quickly in these

days. By the end of the year he has read between a hundred and fifty and two hundred novels; no matter how poor he is, this luxury is possible to him, because of the institution of circulating libraries. At the end of a few years he has read several thousand novels. Does he like them? No; he will tell you that they are nearly all the same, but they help him to pass away his idle time; they have become a necessity for him; he would be very unhappy if he could not continue this sort of reading. It is utterly impossible that the result can be anything but a stupefying of the faculties. He can not even remember the names of twenty or thirty books out of thousands; much less does he remember what they contain. The result of all this reading means nothing but a cloudiness in his mind. That is the direct result. The indirect result is that the mind has been kept from developing itself. All development necessarily means some pain; and such reading as I speak of has been employed unconsciously as a means to avoid that pain, and the consequence is atrophy.

Of course this is an extreme case; but it is the ultimate outcome of reading for amusement whenever such amusement becomes a habit, and when there are means close at hand to gratify the habit. At present in Japan there is little danger of this state of things; but I use the illustration for the sake of its ethical warning.

This does not mean that there is any sort of good literature which should be shunned. A good novel is just as good reading as even the greatest philosopher can possibly wish for. The whole matter depends upon the way of reading, even more than upon the nature of what is read. Perhaps it is too much to say, as has often been said, that there is no book which has nothing good in it; it is better simply to state that the good of a book depends incomparably more for its influence upon the habits of the reader than upon the art of the writer, no matter how great that writer may be.

In a previous lecture I tried to call your attention to the superiority of the child's methods of observation to those of the man; and the same fact may be noticed in regard to the child's method of reading. Certainly the child can read only very simple things; but he reads most thoroughly; and he thinks and thinks and thinks untiringly about what he reads; one little fairy tale will give him mental occupation for a month after he has read it. All the energies of his little fancy are exhausted upon the tale; and if his parents be wise, they do not allow him to read a second tale, until the pleasure of the first, and its imaginative effect, has begun to die away. Later habits, habits which I shall venture to call bad, soon destroy the child's power of really attentive reading. But let us now take the case of a professional reader, a scientific reader; and we shall observe the same power, developed of course to an enormous degree. In the office of a great publishing house which I used to visit, there are received every year sixteen thousand manuscripts. All these must be looked at and judged; and such work in all publishing offices is performed by what is called professional readers. The professional reader must be a scholar, and a man of very uncommon capacity. Out of a thousand manuscripts he will read perhaps not more than one; out of two thousand he may possibly read three. The others he simply looks at for a few seconds—one glance is enough for him to decide whether the manuscript is worth reading or not. The shape of a single sentence will tell him that, from the literary point of view. As regards subject, even the title is enough for him to judge, in a large number of cases. Some manuscripts may receive a minute or even five minutes of his attention; very few receive a longer consideration. Out of sixteen thousand, we may suppose that sixteen are finally selected for judgment. He reads these from beginning to end. Having read them, he decides that only eight can be further considered. The eight are read a second time, much more carefully. At the

close of the second examination the number is perhaps reduced to seven. These seven are destined for a third reading; but the professional reader knows better than to read them immediately. He leaves them locked up in a drawer, and passes a whole week without looking at them. At the end of the week he tries to see whether he can remember distinctly each of these seven manuscripts and their qualities. Very distinctly he remembers three; the remaining four he can not at once recall. With a little more effort, he is able to remember two more. But two he has utterly forgotten. This is a fatal defect; the work that leaves no impression upon the mind after two readings can not have real value. He then takes the manuscripts out of the drawer, condemns two—the two he could not remember—and re-reads the five. At the third reading everything is judged—subject, execution, thought, literary quality. Three are discovered to be first class; two are accepted by the publishers only as second class. And so the matter ends.

Something like this goes on in all great publishing houses; but unfortunately not all literary work is now judged in the same severe way. It is now judged rather by what the public likes; and the public does not like the best. But you may be sure that in a house such as that of the Cambridge or the Oxford University publishers, the test of a manuscript is very severe indeed; it is there read much more thoroughly than it is likely ever to be read again. Now this professional reader whom we speak of, with all his knowledge and scholarship and experience, reads the book very much in the same way as the child reads a fairy-tale. He has forced his mind to exert all its powers in the same minute way that the child's mind does, to think about everything in the book, in all its bearings, in a hundred different directions. It is not true that a child is a bad reader; the habit of bad reading is only formed much later in life, and is always unnatural. The natural and

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also the scholarly way of reading is the child's way. But it requires what we are apt to lose as we grow up, the golden gift of patience; and without patience nothing, not even reading, can be well done.

Important then as careful reading is, you can readily perceive that it should not be wasted. The powers of a well-trained and highly educated mind ought not to be expended upon any common book. By common I mean cheap and useless literature. Nothing is so essential to self-training as the proper choice of books to read; and nothing is so universally neglected. It is not even right that a person of ability should waste his time in "finding out" what to read. He can easily obtain a very correct idea of the limits of the best in all departments of literature, and keep to that best. Of course, if he has to become a specialist, a critic, a professional reader, he will have to read what is bad as well as what is good, and will be able to save himself from much torment only by an exceedingly rapid exercise of judgment, formed by experience. Imagine, for example, the reading that must have been done, and thoroughly done, by such a critic as Professor Saintsbury. Leaving out of the question all his university training, and his mastery of Greek and Latin classics, which is no small reading to begin with, he must have read some five thousand books in the English of all centuries,—learned thoroughly everything that was in them, the history of each one, and the history of its author, whenever that was accessible. He must also have mastered thoroughly the social and political history relating to all this mass of literature. But this is still less than half his work. For being an authority upon two literatures, his study of French, both old and new French, must have been even more extensive than his study of English. And all his work had to be read as a master reads; there was little mere amusement in the whole from beginning to end. The only pleasure could be in results; but these results are very great.

Nothing is more difficult in this world than to read a book and then to express clearly and truly in a few lines exactly what the literary value of the book is. There are not more than twenty people in the world that can do this, for the experience as well as the capacity required must be enormous. Very few of us can hope to become even third or fourth class critics after even a lifetime of study. But we can all learn to read; and that is not by any means a small feat. The great critics can best show us the way to do this, by their judgment.

Yet after all, the greatest of critics is the public—not the public of a day or a generation, but the public of centuries, the consensus of national opinion or of human opinion about a book that has been subjected to the awful test of time. Reputations are made not by critics, but by the accumulation of human opinion through hundreds of years. And human opinion is not sharply defined like the opinion of a trained critic; it cannot explain; it is vague, like a great emotion of which we cannot exactly describe the nature; it is based upon feeling rather than upon thinking; it only says, "we like this." Yet there is no judgment so sure as this kind of judgment, for it is the outcome of an enormous experience. The test of a good book ought always to be the test which human opinion, working for generations, applies. And this is very simple.

The test of a great book is whether we want to read it only once or more than once. Any really great book we want to read the second time even more than we wanted to read it the first time; and every additional time that we read it we find new meanings and new beauties in it. A book that a person of education and good taste does not care to read more than once is very probably not worth much. Sometime ago there was a very clever discussion going on regarding the art of the great French novelist, Zola; some people claimed that he possessed absolute genius; others claimed that he had only talent of a very remarkable

kind. The battle of argument brought out some strange extravagances of opinion. But suddenly a very great critic simply put this question: "How many of you have read, or would care to read, one of Zola's books a second time?" There was no answer; the fact was settled. Probably no one would read a book by Zola more than once; and this is proof positive that there is no great genius in them, and no great mastery of the highest form of feeling. Shallow or false any book must be, that, although bought by a hundred thousand readers, is never read more than once. But we can not consider the judgment of a single individual infallible. The opinion that makes a book great must be the opinion of many. For even the greatest critics are apt to have certain dulnesses, certain inappreciations. Carlyle, for example, could not endure Browning; Byron could not endure some of the greatest of English poets. A man must be many sided to utter a trustworthy estimate of many books. We may doubt the judgment of the single critic at times. But there is no doubt possible in regard to the judgment of generations. Even if we cannot at once perceive anything good in a book which has been admired and praised for hundreds of years, we may be sure that by trying, by studying it carefully, we shall at last be able to feel the reason of this admiration and praise. The best of all libraries for a poor man would be a library entirely composed of such great works only, books which have passed the test of time.

This then would be the most important guide for us in the choice of reading. We should read only the books that we want to read more than once, nor should we buy any others, unless we have some special reason for so investing money. The second fact demanding attention is the general character of the value that lies hidden within all such great books. They never become old: their youth is immortal. A great book is not apt to be comprehended by a young person at the first reading except in a superficial

way. Only the surface, the narrative, is absorbed and enjoyed. No young man can possibly see at first reading the qualities of a great book. Remember that it has taken humanity in many cases hundreds of years to find out all that there is in such a book. But according to a man's experience of life, the text will unfold new meanings to him. The book that delighted us at eighteen, if it be a good book, will delight us much more at twenty-five, and it will prove like a new book to us at thirty years of age. At forty we shall re-read it, wondering why we never saw how beautiful it was before. At fifty or sixty years of age the same facts will repeat themselves. A great book grows exactly in proportion to the growth of the reader's mind. It was the discovery of this extraordinary fact by generations of people long dead that made the greatness of such works as those of Shakespeare, of Dante, or of Goethe. Perhaps Goethe can give us at this moment the best illustration. He wrote a number of little stories in prose, which children like, because to children they have all the charm of fairy-tales. But he never intended them for fairy-tales; he wrote them for experienced minds. A young man finds very serious reading in them; a middle aged man discovers an extraordinary depth in their least utterance; and an old man will find in them all the world's philosophy, all the wisdom of life. If one is very dull, he may not see much in them, but just in proportion as he is a superior man, and in proportion as his knowledge of life has been extensive, so will he discover the greatness of the mind that conceived them.

This does not mean that the authors of such books could have preconceived the entire range and depth of that which they put into their work. Great art works unconsciously without ever suspecting that it is great; and the larger the genius of a writer, the less chance there is of his ever knowing that he has genius; for his power is less likely to be discovered by the public until long after he is dead. The

great things done in literature have not usually been done by men who thought themselves great. Many thousand years ago some wanderer in Arabia, looking at the stars of the night, and thinking about the relation of man to the unseen powers that shaped the world, uttered all his heart in certain verses that have been preserved to us in the Book of Job. To him the sky was a solid vault; of that which might exist beyond it, he never even dreamed. Since his time how vast has been the expansion of our astronomical knowledge! We now know thirty millions of suns, all of which are probably attended by planets, giving a probable total of three hundred millions of other worlds within sight of our astronomical instruments. Probably multitudes of these are inhabited by intelligent life; it is even possible that within a few years more we shall obtain proof positive of the existence of an older civilization than our own upon the planet Mars. How vast a difference between our conception of the universe and Job's conception of it. Yet the poem of that simple minded Arab or Jew has not lost one particle of its beauty and value because of this difference. Quite the contrary! With every new astronomical discovery the words of Job take grander meanings to us, simply because he was truly a great poet and spoke only the truth that was in his heart thousands of years ago. Very anciently also there was a Greek story-teller who wrote a little story about a boy and girl in the country called "Daphnis and Chloe." It was a little story, telling in the simplest language possible how that boy and girl fell in love with each other, and did not know why, and all the innocent things they said to each other, and how grown-up people kindly laughed at them and taught them some of the simplest laws of life. What a trifling subject, some might think. But that story, translated into every language in the world, still reads like a new story to us; and every time we re-read it, it appears still more beautiful, because it teaches a few true and tender things about inno-

cence and the feeling of youth. It never can grow old, any more than the girl and boy whom it describes. Or, to descend to later times, about three hundred years ago a French priest conceived the idea of writing down the history of a student who had been charmed by a wanton woman, and led by her into many scenes of disgrace and pain. This little book, called "Manon Lescaut," describes for us the society of a vanished time, a time when people wore swords and powdered their hair, a time when everything was as different as possible from the life of today. But the story is just as true of our own time as of any time in civilization; the pain and the sorrow affect us just as if they were our own; and the woman, who is not really bad, but only weak and selfish, charms the reader almost as much as she charmed her victim, until the tragedy ends. Here again is one of the world's great books, that cannot die. Or, to take one more example out of a possible hundred, consider the stories of Hans Andersen. He conceived the notion that moral truths and social philosophy could be better taught through little fairy-tales and child stories than in almost any other way; and with the help of hundreds of old fashioned tales, he made a new series of wonderful stories that have become a part of every library and are read in all countries by grown up people much more than by children. There is in this astonishing collection of stories, a story about a mermaid which I suppose you have all read. Of course there can be no such thing as a mermaid; from one point of view the story is quite absurd. But the emotions of unselfishness and love and loyalty which the story expresses are immortal, and so beautiful that we forgot about all the unreality of the framework; we see only the eternal truth behind the fable.

You will understand now exactly what I mean by a great book. What about the choice of books? Some years ago you will remember that an Englishman of science, Sir John Lubbock, wrote a list of what he called the best books

in the world—or at least the best hundred books. Then some publishers published the hundred books in cheap form. Following the example of Sir John, other literary men made different lists of what they thought the best hundred books in existence; and now quite enough time has passed to show us the value of these experiments. They have proved utterly worthless, except to the publishers. Many persons may buy the hundred books; but very few read them. And this is not because Sir John Lubbock's idea was bad; it is because no one man can lay down a definite course of reading for the great mass of differently constituted minds. Sir John expressed only his opinion of what most appealed to him; another man of letters would have made a different list; probably no two men of letters would have made exactly the same one. The choice of great books must under all circumstances be an individual one. In short, you must choose for yourselves according to the light that is in you. Very few persons are so many sided as to feel inclined to give their best attention to many different kinds of literature. In the average of cases it is better for a man to confine himself to a small class of subjects—the subjects best according with his natural powers and inclinations, the subjects that please him. And no man can decide for us without knowing our personal character and disposition perfectly well and being in sympathy with it, where our powers lie. But one thing is easy to do—that is, to decide, first, what subject in literature has already given you pleasure, to decide, secondly, what is the best that has been written upon that subject, and then to study that best to the exclusion of ephemeral and trifling books which profess to deal with the same theme, but which have not yet obtained the approbation of great critics or of a great public opinion.

Those books which have obtained both are not so many in number as you might suppose. Each great civilization has produced only two or three of the first rank, if we except the single civilization of the Greeks. The sacred

books embodying the teaching of all great religions necessarily take place in the first rank, even as literary productions; for they have been polished and repolished, and have been given the highest possible literary perfection of which the language in which they are written is capable. The great epic poems which express the ideals of races, these also deserve a first place. Thirdly, the masterpieces of drama, as reflecting life, must be considered to belong to the highest literature. But how many books are thus represented? Not very many. The best, like diamonds, will never be found in great quantities.

Besides such general indications as I thus ventured, something may be said regarding a few choice books—those which a student should wish to possess good copies of and read all his life. There are not many of these. For European students it would be necessary to name a number of Greek authors. But without a study of the classic tongues such authors could be of much less use to the students of this country; moreover, a considerable knowledge of Greek life and Greek civilization is necessary to quicken appreciation of them. Such knowledge is best gained through engravings, pictures, coins, statues—through those artistic objects which enable the imagination to see what has existed; and as yet the artistic side of classical study is scarcely possible in Japan, for want of pictorial and other material. I shall therefore say very little regarding the great books that belong to this category. But as the whole foundation of European literature rests upon classical study, the student should certainly attempt to master the outlines of Greek mythology, and the character of the traditions which inspired the best of Greek literature and drama. You can scarcely open an English book belonging to any high class of literature, in which you will not find allusions to Greek beliefs, Greek stories, or Greek plays. The mythology is almost necessary for you; but the vast range of the subject might well deter most of you from attempting a thorough

study of it. A thorough study of it, however, is not necessary. What is necessary is an outline only; and a good book, capable of giving you that outline in a vivid and attractive manner would be of inestimable service. In French and German there are many such books; in English, I know of only one, a volume in Bohn's Library, Keightley's "Mythology of Ancient Greece and Italy." It is not an expensive work; and it has the exceptional quality of teaching in a philosophical spirit. As for the famous Greek books, the value of most of them for you must be small, because the number of adequate translations is small. I should begin by saying that all verse translations are useless. No verse translation from the Greek can reproduce the Greek verse—we have only twenty or thirty lines of Homer translated by Tennyson, and a few lines of other Greek poets translated by equally able men, which are at all satisfactory. Under all circumstances take a prose translation when you wish to study a Greek or Latin author. We should of course consider Homer first. I do not think that you can afford not to read something of Homer. There are two excellent prose translations in English, one of the Iliad and one of the Odyssey. The latter is for you the more important of the two great poems. The references to it are innumerable in all branches of literature; and these references refer usually to the poetry of its theme, for the Odyssey is much more a romance than is the Iliad. The advantage of the prose translation by Lang and Butcher is that it preserves something of the rolling sound and music of the Greek verse, though it is only prose. That book I should certainly consider worth keeping constantly by you; its utility will appear to you at a later day. The great Greek tragedies have all been translated; but I should not so strongly recommend these translations to you. It would be just as well, in most cases, to familiarize yourselves with the stories of the dramas through other sources; and there are hundreds of these. You should at least know

the subject of the great dramas of Sophocles, Æschylus, and above all Euripides. Greek drama was constructed upon a plan that requires much study to understand correctly; it is not necessary that you should understand these matters as an antiquarian does, but it is necessary to know something of the stories of the great plays. As for comedy, the works of Aristophanes are quite exceptional in their value and interest. They require very little explanation; they make us laugh today just as heartily as they made the Athenians laugh thousands of years ago; and they belong to immortal literature. There is the Bohn translation in two volumes, which I would strongly recommend. Aristophanes is one of the great Greek dramatists whom we can read over and over again, gaining at every reading. Of the lyrical poets there is also one translation likely to become an English classic, although a modern one; that is Lang's translation of Theocritus, a tiny little book, but very precious of its kind. You see I am mentioning very few; but these few would mean a great deal for you, should you use them properly. Among later Greek work, work done in the decline of the old civilization, there is one masterpiece that the world will never become tired of—I mentioned it before, the story of "Daphnis and Chloe." This has been translated into every language, and I am sorry to say that the best translation is not English, but French—the version of Amyot. But there are many English translations. That book you certainly ought to read. About the Latin authors, it is not here necessary to say much. There are very good prose translations of Virgil and Horace, but the value of these to you can not be very great without a knowledge of Latin. However, the story of the Æneid is necessary to know, and it were best read in the version of Conington. In the course of your general education it is impossible to avoid learning something regarding the chief Latin writers and thinkers; but there is one immortal book that you may not have often seen the name of; and it is a book everybody

should read—I mean the "Golden Ass" of Apuleius. You have this in a good English translation. It is only a story of sorcery, but one of the most wonderful stories ever written, and it belongs to world literature rather than to the literature of a time.

But the Greek myths, although eternally imperishable in their beauty, are not more intimately related to English literature than are the myths of the ancient English religion, the religion of the Northern races, which has left its echoes all through our forms of speech, even in the names of the days of the week. A student of English literature ought to know something about Northern mythology. It is full of beauty also, beauty of another and stranger kind; and it embodied one of the noblest warrior-faiths that ever existed, the religion of force and courage. You have now in the library a complete collection of Northern poetry, I mean the two volumes of the "Corpus Poeticum Boreali." Unfortunately you have not as yet a good collection of the Sagas and Eddas. But, as in the case of the vaster subject of Greek mythology, there is an excellent small book in English, giving an outline of all that is important—I mean necessary for you—in regard to both the religion and the literature of the Northern races, Mallet's "Northern Antiquities." Sir Walter Scott contributed the most valuable portion of the translations in this little book; and these translations have stood the test of time remarkably well. The introductory chapters by Bishop Percy are old fashioned, but this fact does not in the least diminish the stirring value of the volume. I think it is one of the books that every student should try to possess.

With regard to the great modern masterpieces translated into English from other tongues, I can only say that it is better to read them in the originals, if you can. If you can read Goethe's "Faust" in German, do not read it in English; and if you can read Heine in German, the French translation in prose, which he superintended,

and the English translations (there are many of them) in verse can be of no use to you. But if German be too difficult, then read "Faust" in the prose version of Hayward, as revised by Dr. Buchheim. You have that in the library; and it is the best of the kind in existence. "Faust" is a book that a man should buy and keep, and read many times during his life. As for Heine, he is a world poet, but he loses a great deal in translation; and I can only recommend the French prose version of him; the English versions of Browning and Lazarus and others are often weak. Some years ago a series of extraordinary translations of Heine appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine;* but these have not appeared, I believe, in book form.

As for Dante, I do not know whether he can make a strong appeal to you in any language except his own; and you must understand the middle ages very well to feel how wonderful he was. I might say something similar about other great Italian poets. Of the French dramatists, you must study Molière; he is next in importance only to Shakespeare. But do not read him in any translation. Here I should say positively, that one who cannot read French might as well leave Molière alone; the English language cannot reproduce his delicacies of wit and allusion.

As for modern English literature, I have tried in the course of my lectures to indicate the few books deserving of a place in world-literature; and I need scarcely repeat them here. Going back a little further, however, I should like to remind you again of the extraordinary merit of Malory's book, the "Morte D'Arthur," and to say that it is one of the very few that you should buy and keep and read often. The whole spirit of chivalry is in that book; and I need scarcely tell you how deep is the relation of the spirit of chivalry to all modern English literature. I do not recommend you to read Milton, unless you intend to make certain special studies of language; the linguistic value of Milton is based upon Greek and Latin literature. As for

his lyrics—that is another matter. Those ought to be studied. As there is little more to say, except by way of suggestion, I think that you ought, every one of you, to have a good copy of Shakespeare, and to read Shakespeare through once every year, not caring at first whether you can understand all the sentences or not; that knowledge can be acquired at a later day. I am sure that if you follow this advice you will find Shakespeare become larger every time that you read him, and that at last he will begin to exercise a very strong and very healthy influence upon your methods of thinking and feeling. A man does not require to be a great scholar in order to read Shakespeare. And what is true of reading Shakespeare, you will find to be true also in lesser degree of all the world's great books. You will find it true of Goethe's "Faust." You will find it true of the best chapters in the poems of Homer. You will find it true of the best plays of Molière. You will find it true of Dante, and of those books in the English Bible about which I gave a short lecture last year. And therefore I do not think that I can better conclude these remarks than by repeating an old but very excellent piece of advice which has been given to young readers: "Whenever you hear of a new book being published, read an old one."

CHAPTER II

ON THE RELATION OF LIFE AND CHARACTER TO LITERATURE

I

The other day, when lecturing on Miss Brontë, I promised a lecture in regard to certain qualities of creative work in fiction. This is the lecture that I now wish to give; but the subject is one which requires a broad consideration of many other things besides methods. What it really implies you will find indicated in the title of this lecture.

Remember that when I am talking to you about literature I never mean history or science or philosophy; I mean only the great division of that literary art which is the expression of feeling and of emotional life. Bearing this in mind we can proceed.

The three main divisions of literature are poetry, drama and fiction. I want to speak of these in relation to the lives of the men who engage in their production. That is what is meant by the title of the essay. This is a very important subject for every student of literature to consider. Any one wishing to become an author in any one of the three branches of literature that I have mentioned, must ask himself honestly several questions and be able to answer them in the affirmative. If he cannot answer them in the affirmative, he had better leave literature alone—for the time being at least.

The first question is, Have I creative power? That is to say, Am I able to produce either poetry, or fiction, or drama, by my own experience, out of my own mental operation, without following the ideas of other people, or being influenced, consciously or unconsciously, only by the opinions of others. If you cannot answer this question with

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an honest "Yes," then you can only be an imitator.

But suppose that you can answer this first question in the affirmative, there remains another question almost equally important to ask. It is this: Can I devote my life—or at least the best part of my leisure time—to literary work? If you cannot be sure of much time to spare, you should be sure, at least, of being able to give, every day of your existence, a short time to one sustained object. If you are not sure of being able to do this, you will find the way of literature very hard indeed.

But there is yet a third question to be asked. Even if you have the power and the time, it is necessary that you should determine this matter: Must I mingle with society and take my part in everyday life, or should I seek quiet and isolation? The third question can be answered only according to the character of your particular literary power. Certain kinds of literature require solitude—cannot be produced without it. Other kinds of literature oblige the author, whether he likes or does not like it, to mix a great deal with people, to observe all their actions, and to fill himself with every possible experience of active life.

I think now the ground is swept. We can begin the second section of the lecture.

II

What I have suggested in the above series of questions, must now be dwelt upon in detail. Let us first consider poetry in its relation to the conduct of life.

Poetry is not one of those forms of literature which require that the author shall mix a great deal with active life. On the contrary, poetry is especially the art of solitude. Poetry requires a great deal of time, a great deal of thought, a great deal of silent work, and all the sincerity of which a man's nature is capable. The less that a real poet mingles with social life, the better for his art. This is

a well known fact in all countries. It is so well known that if a young poet allows himself to be flattered and petted and made much of by the rich and mighty, it is commonly said that he is going to be ruined. One cannot be perfectly sincere to oneself and become an object of fashionable attention. It is utterly impossible. The art of poetry requires that the poet be as solitary in his house as a priest. I do not mean that it should be necessary to be an ascetic, or anything of that kind, nor that he should not be troubled with family cares. It is very necessary that he should have a family, and know all that the family means, in order to be a good poet. But he must certainly renounce what are generally called social pleasures. In the same degree that he fails to do this, he is almost certain to fail in his poetry.

Let us here consider a few extraordinary facts about the poetical life. Of course you know that poetry does not mean merely writing verses, no matter how correct the verses may be. It means the power to move men's hearts and minds by verse. Now a Persian poet once observed that no bad man could possibly become a poet. There is a good deal of truth in that statement, notwithstanding some apparent exceptions. You have doubtless read that many European poets were bad men. But you must take such statements with a great deal of reserve and qualification. I imagine, for example, that you will immediately think of Byron. But Byron was not fairly judged; and you must not allow yourselves to accept any mere religious or social declaration about the character of the poet. The real facts are that Byron was unjustly treated and goaded and irritated into immoral courses. Moreover the deeper nature of Byron was essentially generous and sympathetic, and when he follows the inspiration of his deeper nature, he gives us the best of what he has. I might speak of many other poets; you will always find that there was something good and generous in the man, however great his faults may have appeared on the surface. Indeed, I knew only one

or two exceptions to this Persian observation that no bad man can be a poet, and these exceptions are not satisfactory. We find in the time of the Italian renaissance a few extraordinarily wicked men who made a reputation as poets. I might mention for example the name of Malatesta. But when we come to examine the literary work of this cruel and ferocious man, we find that its only merit is the perfect correctness of the verse. Perfectly correct verse was greatly esteemed in that age; but we are much wiser today. We now know that no mere correctness qualifies verse as true poetry; and I do not think that the Persian poet would have found any poetry in the love verses of the wicked Malatesta.

Of course when the Persian poet spoke of a bad man, he meant what is bad according to the consensus of human experience. I should not call a man bad only because he happened to offend against particular conventions. I should call a man bad only in so far as his relation to others proves him to be cruel, unfeeling, selfish, and ungrateful. No such man as that can write poetry.

So the fundamental truth of this whole matter is simply that a poet must be born a poet—as the English proverb says, "A poet is born, not made." No amount of education will make a man a poet. Every year in England two great universities turn out about four thousand good men stuffed with all that systematic education can force into them. German universities can do better than that. French universities do quite as well. But out of these thousands and thousands, how many can become poets? Not half a dozen in all the countries of Europe together. Education will help a poet; it will greatly enrich his powers of language; it will train his ear to the charm of musical sound, and train his brain to perceive all possible laws of proportion and taste in form. But it cannot make him a poet. I suppose there are today in England alone at least thirty thousand people capable of writing almost any form of correct verse. Yet

perhaps not even two of them are poets; for poetry is a question of character and temperament. One must be born with a love of the beautiful, with great capacities for sympathy, with a certain gentleness of disposition, in order to be able to act upon the feelings of men through literature. The qualities that make the poet, belong to the softer side of human nature—hence the proverb that the poet is a man who is half a woman. I think that you have all observed that certain admirable but hard kinds of mind are almost insensible to sentiment in literature. As a general rule—though exceptions have existed—mathematicians cannot be poets; the great Goethe, distinguished as he was in science by reason of his constructive imagination, was singularly deficient in mathematical capacity. It would appear that certain powers of the mind cannot be cultivated except at the expense of other faculties. Everywhere poets have been recognized as more or less unpractical in active life; they rarely make good business men; they never can do certain things requiring insensibility to the feelings of others. Essentially sympathetic, their conduct is ruled in all things by feelings rather than by cold reason, and that is why they very often make such unfortunate mistakes. But they should be thought of as representing in the highest degree what is emotional in man. If the whole world were governed by hard and fast rules, it would become very much more difficult to live in than it now is because of the poets who help to keep alive the more generous impulses of human nature. That is why they have been called priests.

I do not think that in Japan the most difficult form of sustained emotional effort has ever been comparable to the art of poetry in Western countries. It is, indeed, such a difficult thing, to compare the achievements of two countries, that if I were speaking only of poetry as embodied in verse, I think that you would find my remarks decidedly extravagant. But poetry is not confined to forms of verse.

There may be poetry in beautiful prose; and some of the very best English literature deserves to be qualified as prose-poetry, because it produces the emotional effect of verse. Now any form of literature that really does this requires all the time and all the power that the writer can spare. And it is for this reason that the life of the man who writes it must be solitary—a life of devotion to art.

III

Let us now turn to fiction—excluding the variety of it which might be termed prose-poetry. Fiction should be, in these times, the Mirror of Life. What is a man to do who would devote his time and life in this direction? We must stop and qualify.

Although there are nominally so many different schools of European fiction—Classical, Romantic, Realistic, Naturalistic, Psychological, Problematical, etc., etc.,—we need not bother ourselves with this variety of distinctions, but simply divide fiction into two classes—subjective and objective. Fiction is either a picture of things imagined, or a picture of things actually seen. Can we make a preference? From the artistic point of view I am not sure that we can; for, contrary to what vulgar public opinion believes, the greatest works of fiction and drama have really been subjective, not objective. I need not remind you that Shakespeare did not see and did not experience the incidents of his astonishing plays, and I need not remind you that the great Greek dramatists did not see the facts of tragedy which they put upon the stage and which powerfully move our hearts. This is an astonishing fact, that the mind should perceive more clearly than the eyes—but it is only when the mind is that of a genius. From the artistic standpoint we cannot, nevertheless, dare to say that one method of literature is necessarily better than the other, merely because the greatest work happens to have been done by that

method. In some future time we might find an objective method made equally great. And from the individual point of view, from the point of view of the young author, the young student, a preference is absolutely necessary. It is all-important that he should discover in what direction his literary strength is growing. If he feels that he can do better by imagination than by observation, then let him by all means cultivate romantic work. But if he feels sure that he can do better by using his senses—by observing, comparing—then he must, as a duty to himself, adopt a realistic method. And the conduct of his life in relation to literature must be decided according to which path he decides to take.

As I told you, the highest forms of fiction and drama have been the work of intuition, of imagination. Thackeray, for example, no more than Shakespeare actually saw or experienced what he put into his novels. Yet those novels much surpassed the novels of Miss Brontë, who only wrote what she heard and saw and felt. If you did not know the real facts of the case, you would think that Thackeray was more realistic than Miss Brontë. Great imaginative work is more realistic than reality itself, more apparently objective than the result of objective study. But as I reminded you, it is only a genius who can reach this sort of realism through intuition. However, there are minor degrees of genius. You must have noticed some of these among yourselves. In any gathering of students there are always a few remarkable persons in whom the other students are willing to put their trust whenever any emergency arises. Suppose a thousand students are in a difficult position of some kind or anxious about something; presently out of that thousand, leaders or guides or advisors would come forward. It is not necessary at all that they should be particularly strong or formidable persons; what is wanted in a time of embarrassment or danger is a good head, not a strong arm. You instinctively know, I presume, that

he who has the best head among you is not necessarily the best scholar. It is not scholarship that is needed for difficult circumstances; it is what we call "mother-wit," strong common sense, that is what we commonly mean in England by "a good head." Persons of this kind do not often make mistakes. Notice how they act when they come in contact with strangers—they remain quite at ease, unembarrassed, and they know what to do and what to say on meeting extraordinary persons or extraordinary events. Now what is this power, this "mother-wit"? It is a kind of strong intuition. It is the best of all wits that a man can be born to. If a man have this gift in a very great degree, and if he happen at the same time to have a love of literature, he can be a great dramatist or a great novelist. There is the real subjective worker. He has no difficulty in creating imaginary persons, and making them perform their parts; he has been born with the knowledge of what most kinds of men and women would do under certain circumstances. But a high degree of genius is not often found in this direction; all that I want you to bear clearly in mind, is that for subjective work, imaginative work, you must know yourselves to possess a certain amount of this intuition. Unless you have it, it were better to work in other directions.

The dramatic faculty, this true creative power of which I am speaking, is always rare in the highest degree. When we find it at all in these days, we find it only in minor degrees. Very possibly it exists in varying states in minds that never cultivate it—not at least in a literary direction. For men having this power now-a-days are likely to use their constructive imagination in directions which assure material success much more certainly than literature can ever do. They may become diplomatists, or great men of business, or bankers, or political leaders; their knowledge of human nature and their intuition of human motives can help them equally well in many other directions besides literature, and in most directions vastly better. This is a

very different kind of character from the character of the emotional poet. It is much more varied, and it is much stronger. To speak of any rules for the conduct of literary life in the case of such men is useless. They need no counsel. They do very much as they please, and obstacles never dishearten them. It is worth noting, however, that they generally take an active part in social life; it is more interesting for them than a play; it furnishes them with continual motives of inspiration; and it has no terror for them of any kind. They are like strong swimmers accustomed to surf. I suppose you know that while almost everybody knows how to swim more or less, surf-swimmers are not very common. In America or other countries good surf-swimmers get high wages in the Government life-saving service; one must not only have learned from childhood, but must have great natural strength and skill. Now in the great sea of social life, where clumsy people are so easily drowned, the character of which I speak is like that of a strong surf-swimmer. He has nothing to fear from breakers. Observe also that men of this class, as the history of English literature especially shows, always find time to do what they want, and do not trouble themselves much about the "wear and tear" of social duty. Take, for example, the history of Victorian literature. Only one of the four great Victorian poets possessed the dramatic faculty in a high degree—Robert Browning. Tennyson, Rossetti, and Swinburne led lives of solitude and meditation; Browning on the other hand was constantly in society, studying human nature as well as obtaining enjoyment from social experience. Or take again the prose-writers. The great romantic novelists were all solitary men; the great dramatic novelists were essentially social men. Thackeray, for instance, was especially a man of society. Or to take a still later example, Meredith, the greatest of English psychological novelists, is of course a social figure. It was in the life of the upper classes that he found the substance of his

extraordinary novels. Not to multiply examples, which would require too much time, it may be said that as a general rule, solitude is of no use to men of creative genius.

IV

I think I have shown you, or suggested to you, that two great departments of literature—the emotional, as represented especially by poetry; and the creative, as especially represented by drama or the dramatic novels—depend altogether upon character, upon inheritance. You cannot make a great poet or a great dramatist by education, though education may help. And you have seen that the two kinds of character belonging respectively to romantic literature and to realistic literature are almost exactly opposed to each other. Both are rare. It is not likely in these days that many among us can hope to belong to either class. We generally know whether we belong to one or the other of them at an early period of life. The extraordinary faculties usually, though not always, manifest themselves in youth. It is true that, very rarely, a great talent only develops about middle age—this occurring chiefly in the case of prose writers. But unless we have the very best of reasons to believe ourselves born to great things in literature, it is much better not to imagine that we have any special mission. Most students of literature are more likely to belong to the third class than to either of the classes preceding, and it is of the third class especially that something useful may be said.

The ordinary class of literary men must depend chiefly upon observation and constant practice. They cannot hope for sudden inspiration or for extraordinary intuition. They must find truth and beauty by painfully searching for them; and they can learn how to express what they see and feel only by years of study and application. Education for these is almost, though not absolutely, indispensable. I

say "not absolutely," because self-training can sometimes supply all, and more, that the ordinary education is capable of giving. But as a rule to which the exceptions are few, the ordinary student must depend upon his college training. Without it, it is very likely that he will always remain in his work what we call in literature "provincial." Provincialism as a literary term does not mean a country tone, a rustic clumsiness of thinking and speaking. It means a strong tendency to the commonplace, an inclination to dwell upon things universally known as if they were new discoveries; and it also means the habit of allowing oneself to be so unduly influenced by some one book or another, or by one class of ideas, that any well-educated reader recognizes at once the source of every idea expressed. This is provincialism. The great danger in self-education is that it leaves a man all his life in the provincial stage, unless he happens to have extraordinary chances, extraordinary tastes, and very much time to cultivate both.

The most important thing for the literary student, with a university training, to do at the beginning of a literary career, is to find out as soon as possible in what direction his intellectual strength chiefly lies. It may take years to find this out; but until it is found out he is scarcely likely to do anything great. Where absolute genius does not exist, literature must depend upon the cultivation of a man's best faculties in a single direction. To attempt work in a number of directions is always hazardous, and seldom gives good results. Every literary man has to arrive at this conclusion. It is true that you find in foreign literature cases of men not absolute geniuses, who have done well both in poetry and in prose, or in prose-fiction and in drama—that is, in apparently two directions. I should not instance Victor Hugo; his is a case of pure genius; but I should take such examples as Meredith in England, or Björnson in Norway, as better illustrating what I wish to say. You must remember that in cases like these the two different

kinds of literature produced are really very close to each other, so close that one absolutely grows out of the other. For example, the great Norwegian dramatist began as a writer of stories and novels, all of which were intensely dramatic in form. From the dramatic novel to the play is but a short step. Or in the case of the English novelist and poet, we really find illustrations of only one and the same faculty both in his poetry and in his prose. The novels in one case are essentially psychological novels; the poetry is essentially psychological poetry. Again Browning's plays are scarcely more than the development in dramatic form of the ideas to be found in the dramatic poems. Or take the case of Kingsley—essentially a romantic—a romantic of the very first class. He was great in poetry and great in prose; but there is an extraordinary resemblance between the poetry and the prose in his case, and he was wise enough to write very little poetry, for he knew where his chief strength lay. If you want to see and judge for yourself, observe the verse of Kingsley's poem on "Edith of the Swan-Neck," and then read a page or two of the romance of "Hereward." I could give you fifty examples of the same kind in English literature. Men have succeeded in two directions only when one of these naturally led into the other. But no student should make the serious mistake—a mistake which hundreds of trained English men of letters are making today—of trying to write in two entirely different and opposed directions—for example, in romantic poetry and realistic prose. It is very necessary to know in which way your tastes should be cultivated, in which way you are most strong. Mediocrity is the certain result of not knowing. For after all, this last class of literature, like every other, depends for success upon character—upon inborn conditions, upon inheritance of tastes and feelings and tendencies. Once that you know these, the way becomes plain, though not smooth; everything thereafter depends upon hard work, constant effort.

Should one seek or avoid solitude in the pursuance of this ordinary class of literary aims? That again depends upon character. It is first necessary to know your strength, to decide upon the direction to take; these things having been settled, you must know whether you have to depend upon feeling and imagination as well as upon observation, or upon observation only. Your natural disposition will then instruct you. If you find that you can work best in solitude, it is a duty both to yourself and to literature to deny yourself social engagements that may interfere with the production of good work.

All this leads to the subject of an extraordinary difficulty in the way of any new Japanese literature, a difficulty about which I wanted to talk to you from the first. I think you know that leisure is essential to the production of any art in any country—that is, any national art. I am not speaking of those extraordinary exceptions furnished by men able to produce wonderful things under any circumstances. Such exceptional men do not make national art; they produce a few inimitable works of genius. An art grows into existence out of the slow labour and thought and feelings of thousands. In that sense, leisure is absolutely necessary to art. Need I remind you that every Japanese art has been the result of generations of leisurely life? Those who made the now famous arts of Japan—literature as well as ceramics or painting or metal work—were not men who did their work in a hurry. Nobody was in a hurry in ancient times. Those elaborate ceremonies, now known as tea-ceremonies, indicate the life of a very leisurely and very aesthetic period. I mention that as one illustration of many things. Today, although some people try to insist that the arts of Japan are as flourishing as ever, the best judges frankly declare that the old arts are being destroyed. It is not only foreign influence in the shape of bad taste that is destroying them; it is the want of leisure. Every year the time formerly allowed for pleasure of any

kind is becoming more and more curtailed. None of you who are here listening to me can fail to remember a period when people had much more time than they have now. And none of you will fail to see a period in which the want of time will become much more painful, much more terrible than at present. For your civilization is gradually, but surely, taking an industrial character; and in the time when it shall have become almost purely industrial there will be very little leisure indeed. Very possibly you are thinking that England, Germany, and France are essentially industrial countries—though able to produce so much art. But the conditions are not the same. Industrialism in other countries has not rendered impossible the formation of wealthy leisure classes; those leisure classes still exist, and they have rendered possible, especially in England, the production of great literature. A very long time indeed must elapse before Japan can present an analogous condition.

The want of time you will feel every year more and more. And there are other and more serious difficulties to think about. Every few years young Japanese scholars who have been trained abroad in the universities of Europe—who have been greatly praised there, and who show every promise—return to Japan. After their return, what a burden of obligations is thrust upon their shoulders! They have, to begin with, to assume the cares of a family; they have to become public officers, and to perform official duty for a much greater number of hours than would be asked of men in similar positions abroad; and under no circumstances can they hope for that right to dispose of their own time which is allowed to professors or officials in foreign countries. No: they must at once accept onerous positions which involve hundreds of duties and which are very likely to keep a man occupied on many days of the year from sunrise until a late hour of the night. Even what are thought and what used really to be pleasurable oc-

casions, have ceased to be pleasing; time is lacking for the pleasure, but the fatigue and the pain remain. I need not particularize how many festivals, banquets, public and private celebrations, any public official is obliged to attend. At present this cannot be helped. It is the struggle between the old state and the new; and the readjustment will take many years to effect. But is it any wonder that these scholars do not produce great things in literature? It is common for foreigners to say that the best Japanese scholars do not seem to do anything after they return to Japan. The fact is that they do too much, but not of the kind that leaves a permanent work.

Most of you, whether rich or otherwise, will be asked after your university life is over to do a great deal too much. I imagine that most of you will have to do the work of at least three men. Trained teachers, trained officers, trained men of any kind, are still rare. There are not enough of them; there is too much work to do, and too few men to do it. And in the face of these unquestionable facts, how can you hope to produce any literature? Assuredly it is very discouraging. It could not be more discouraging.

There is an old English proverb that seems opportune in this connection:

> For every trouble under the sun
> There is a remedy, or there is none.
> If there is one, try to find it;
> If there be none, never mind it.

I think you will agree with me that the remedy is for the moment out of the question; and our duty is to "never mind it," as the proverb says. Discouraging for literature though the prospect seems, I think that strong minds should not be frightened by it, but should try to discover whether modern English literature does not offer us some guiding examples in this relation. It certainly does. A great deal of excellent English literature belonging to that third class

which I have specified, has been created under just the same kind of disheartening circumstances. Great poetry has not been written under these conditions—that requires solitude. Great drama and great dramatic novels have never been produced under such conditions. But the literature of the essay, which is very important; the great literature of short stories; and a great deal of thoughtful work of the systematic order, such as historical or social or critical studies, —all this has been done very successfully by men who have had no time to call their own during sunlight. The literature of observation and experience, and the literature of patient research, do not require days of thought and leisure. Much of such work has been produced, for many generations in England, a little at a time, every night, before going to bed. For example, there is an eminent Englishman of letters named Morley of whom you have doubtless heard—the author of many books, and a great influence in literature, who is also one of the busiest of English lawyers and statesmen. For forty or fifty years this man had never a single hour of leisure by day. All his books were produced, a page or two at a time, late in the evening after his household had gone to sleep. It is not really so much a question of time for this class of literature as a question of perfect regularity of habits. Even twenty minutes a day, or twenty minutes a night, represents a great deal in the course of a couple of years, and may be so used as to produce great results. The only thing is that this small space of time should be utilized regularly as the clock strikes—never interrupted except by unavoidable circumstances, such as sickness. To fatigue one's body, or to injure one's eyesight, by a useless strain is simply a crime. But that should not be necessary under any circumstances in good health. Nor is it necessary to waste time and effort in the production of exactly so much finished manuscript. Not at all. The work of literature should especially be a work of thinking and feeling; the end to be greatly insisted

upon is the record of every experience of thought and feeling. Make the record even in pencil, in short hand, in the shape of little drawings—it matters not how, so long as the record is sufficient to keep fresh the memory when you turn to it again. I am quite sure that the man who loves literature and enjoys a normal amount of good health can make a good book within a year or two, no matter how busy he may otherwise be, if he will follow systematic rules of work.

You may ask what kind of work is good to begin with; I have no hesitation in replying, translation. Translation is the best possible preparation for original work, and translations are vastly needed in Japan. No knowledge of Western literature can ever become really disseminated in Japan merely through the university and the school; it can be disseminated only through translations. The influence of French, or German, of Spanish, Italian, and Russian literatures upon English literature has been very largely effected through translations. Scholarship alone cannot help the formation of a new national literature. Indeed, the scholar, by the very nature of his occupation, is too apt to remain unproductive. After some work of this kind, original work should be attempted. Instinctively some Japanese scholars have been doing this very thing; they have been translating steadily. But there they have mostly stopped. Yet, really, translation should be only the first step of the literary ladder.

As to original work, I have long wanted to say to you something about the real function of literature in relation not to the public, but to the author himself. That function should be moral. Literature ought to be especially a moral exercise. When I use the word moral, please do not understand me to mean anything religious, or anything in the sense of the exact opposite of immoral. I use it here only in the meaning of self-culture—the development within us of the best and strongest qualities of heart and

mind. Literature ought to be, for him that produces it, the chief pleasure and the constant consolation of life. Now, old Japanese customs recognized this fact in a certain way. I am referring to the custom of composing poetry in time of pain, in time of sorrow, in all times of mental trials, as a moral exercise. In this particular form the custom is particularly Japanese, or perhaps in origin Chinese, not Western. But I assure you that among men of letters in the West the moral idea has been followed for hundreds of years, not only in regard to poetry, but in regard to prose. It has not been understood by Western writers in the same sharp way; it has not been taught as a rule of conduct; it has not been known except to the elect, the very best men. But the very best men have found this out; and they have always turned to literature as a moral consolation for all the troubles of life. Do you remember the story of the great Goethe, who when told of the death of his son, exclaimed "Forward, across the dead"—and went on with his work? It was not the first time that he had conquered his grief by turning his mind to composition. Almost any author of experience learns to do something of this kind. Tennyson wrote his "In Memoriam" simply as a refuge from his great grief. Among the poets about whom I lectured to you this year, there is scarcely one whose work does not yield a record of the same thing. The lover of literature has a medicine for grief that no doctor can furnish; he can always transmute his pain into something precious and lasting. None of us in this world can expect to be very happy; the proportion of happiness to unhappiness in the average human life has been estimated as something less than one third. No matter how healthy or strong or fortunate you may be, every one of you must expect to endure a great deal of pain; and it is worth while for you to ask yourselves whether you cannot put it to good use. For pain has a very great value to the mind that knows how to utilize it. Nay, more than this must be said; nothing great ever

was written, or ever will be written, by a man who does not know pain. All great literature has its source in the rich soil of sorrow; and that is the real meaning of the famous verses of Goethe:

> Who ne'er his bread in sorrow ate,—
> Who ne'er the lonely midnight hours,
> Weeping upon his bed has sat,—
> He knows ye not, ye Heavenly powers.

Emerson has uttered very nearly the same idea with those famous verses in which he describes the moral effect upon a strong mind of the great sorrow caused by the death of the woman beloved:

> Though thou love her as thyself,
> As a self of purer clay,
> Though her parting dim the day,
> Stealing grace from all alive—
> Heartily know,
> When half-gods go
> The Gods arrive!

That is to say, even if you loved that woman more than yourself and thought of her as a being superior to humanity, even if with her death the whole world seemed to grow dark, and all things to become colourless, and all life to lose its charm; that grief may be good for you. It is only when the demi-gods, the half-gods, have left us, that we first become able to understand and to see the really divine. For all pain helps to make us wise, howevermuch we may hate it at the time. Of course it is only the young man who sits upon his bed at midnight and weeps; he is weak only for want of experience. The mature man will not weep, but he will turn to literature in order to compose his mind; and he will put his pain into beautiful songs or thoughts that will help to make the hearts of all who read them more tender and true.

Remember, I do not mean that a literary man should write

only to try to forget his suffering. That will do very well for a beginning, for a boyish effort. But a strong man ought not to try to forget in that way. On the contrary, he should try to think a great deal about his grief, to think of it as representing only one little drop in the great sea of the world's pain, to think about it bravely, and to put his thoughts about it into beautiful and impersonal form. Nobody should allow himself for a moment to imagine that his own particular grief, that his own private loss, that his own personal pain, can have any value in literature, except in so far as it truly represents the great pain of human life.

Above all things the literary man must not be selfish in his writing. No selfish reflection is likely to have the least value; that is why no really selfish person can ever become either a great poet or a great dramatist. To meet and to master pain, but especially to master it, is what gives strength. Men wrestle in order to become strong; and for mental strength, one must learn to wrestle with troubles of all kinds. Think of all the similes in literature that express this truth—about fire separating the gold from the rock, about stones becoming polished by striking together in the flow of a stream, about a hundred natural changes representing the violent separation or the destruction of what is superficial.

Better than any advice about method or models, is I think the simple counsel: Whenever you are in trouble and do not know exactly what to do, sit down and write something.

Yet one more thing remains to be said, and it is not unimportant. It is this: A thing once written is not literature. The great difference between literature and everything included under the name of journalism lies in this fact. No man can produce real literature at one writing. I know that there are a great many stories about famous men sitting down to write a wonderful book at one effort, and never even correcting the manuscript afterwards. But I

must tell you that the consensus of literary experience declares nearly all these stories to be palpable lies. To produce even a single sentence of good literature requires that the text be written at least three times. But for one who is beginning, three times three were not too much. And I am not speaking of poetry at all—that may have to be written over as many as fifty times before the proper effect is attained. You will perhaps think this is a contradiction of what I told you before, about the great value of writing down, even in pencil, little notes of your thoughts and feelings. But the contradiction only seems; really there is no contradiction at all. The value of the first notes is very great—greater than the value of any intermediate form. But the writer should remember that such notes represent only the outline of the foundation, the surveying and the clearing of the ground on which his literary structure is slowly and painfully to be raised. The first notes do not express the real thought or the real feeling, no matter how carefully you try to write them. They are only signs, ideographs, helping you to remember. And you will find that to reproduce the real thought faithfully in words will require a great deal of time. I am quite sure that few of you will try to do work in this way in the beginning; you will try every other way first, and have many disappointments. Only painful experience can assure you of the necessity of doing this. For literature more than for any other art, the all-necessary thing is patience. That is especially why I cannot recommend journalism as a medium of expression to literary students—at least, not as a regular occupation. For journalism cannot wait, and the best literature must wait.

I am not sure that these suggestions can have any immediate value; I only hope that you will try to remember them. But in order to test the worth of one of them, I very much hope that somebody will try the experiment of writing one little story or narrative poem, putting it in a drawer, writ-

ing it over again, and hiding it again, month after month, for the time of one year. The work need not take more than a few minutes every day after the first writing. After the last writing at the end of the year, if you read it over again, you will find that the difference between the first form and the last is exactly like the difference of seeing a tree a mile off, first with the naked eye, and afterwards with a very powerful telescope.

CHAPTER III

ON COMPOSITION

I

I HOPE to give, at least once in each term, a short lecture upon the practical part of literature and literary study. This will be, or ought to be, of much more value to you than there could be in a single lecture upon the characteristics of an author. I want to speak to you only as a practical man-of-letters, as one who has served his apprenticeship at the difficult trade of literature. Please understand that in saying this, I am saying only "I am a workman," just as a carpenter would say to you "I am a carpenter," or a smith, "I am a smith." This does not mean in any sense that I am a good workman. I might be a very bad workman, and still have the right to call myself a workman. When a carpenter tells you, "I am a carpenter," you can believe him; but that does not mean that he thinks himself a good carpenter. As for his work, you can judge of that when you find occasion to pay for it. But whether the man be a clumsy and idle workman, or be the best carpenter in town, you know that he can tell you something which you do not know. He has learned how to handle tools, and how to choose the kind of wood best adapted to certain sorts of manufacture. He may be a cheat; he may be very careless about what he does; but it is quite certain that you could learn something from him, because he has served an apprenticeship, and knows, by constant practice of hand and eye, how a carpenter's work should be done.

So much for my position in the matter. Now I want to begin my lecture by trying to disabuse your minds of two or three common errors in regard to literary composition. I do not say that you all indulge these errors; but I think it

not improbable. The first error against which I wish to warn you is the very widespread error that the making of literature—that is to say, the writing of books or poems—is a matter that you can learn through education, through the reading of books, through the mastery of theories. I am going to be absolutely frank with you, but quite heterodox notwithstanding, by telling you that education will not help you to become a poet or a story-teller any more than it could help you to become a carpenter or a blacksmith. There are accessible to you, in libraries, any number of books and treatises about different kinds of woods, about different kinds of tools, and about the industry of woodwork. You might read all of these, and learn by heart every fact of importance that they contain; but that would not enable you to make with your own hands a good table or a good chair. So reading about writing will not teach you how to write. Literature is exactly like a trade in this sense that it can only be acquired by practice. I know that such a statement will shock certain persons of much more learning than I could ever hope to acquire. But I believe this would be entirely due to what is called educational bias, The teachers who teach that literature as a practical art has anything to do with the mere study of books, seem to forget that much of the world's greatest literature was made before there were any books, that the poems of Homer were composed before there were any schools or grammars, that the sacred books of nearly all the great civilizations were written without rules, either grammatical or other—and yet these works remain our admiration for all time.

Another error to be considered, is that the structure of your own language is of such a kind that Western rules of literary art could not be applied to it. But if there be any truth in such a belief, it is truth of a most unimportant kind. As I have told you that a knowledge of literary technicalities, grammatical or prosodical, will not teach you how to write, you will already be able to guess how little I

think of the importance to you of what are commonly called rules of composition. These foreign rules, indeed, are not applicable to your language; but they have no value whatever in the sense I mean. Let us for the time being throw all such rules overboard, and not even think about them. And now that the position is thus made clear, or at least clearer, let me say that the higher rules of literature are universal, and apply equally well to every language under the sun, no matter what its construction. For these universal rules have to do only with the truth; and truth is truth everywhere, no matter in what tongue it may be spoken. Presently we shall turn back to the subject of the universal rule—indeed it will form the principal part of this lecture.

The third error against which I wish to warn you is the foolish belief that great work, or even worthy work, can be done without pains—without very great pains. Nothing has been more productive of injury to young literary students than those stories, or legends, about great writers having written great books in a very short time. They suggest what must be in a million cases impossible, as a common possibility. You hear of Johnson having written "Rasselas" in a few weeks, or of Beckford having done a similar thing, of various other notables never correcting their manuscript—and the youth who has much self-confidence imagines that he can do the same thing and produce literature. I do not believe those stories; I do not say exactly that they are not true; I only say that I do not believe them, and that the books, as we have them now, certainly represent much more than the work of a few weeks or even months. It is much more valuable to remember that Gray passed fourteen years in correcting and improving a single poem, and that no great poem or book, as we now have the text, represents the first form the text. Take, for for example, the poets that we have been reading. It is commonly said that Rossetti's "Blessed Damosel" was written

in his nineteenth year. This is true; but we have the text of the poem as it was written in his nineteenth year, and it is unlike the poem as we now have it; for it was changed and corrected and recorrected scores of times to bring it to its present state of perfection. Almost everything composed by Tennyson was changed and changed and changed again, to such an extent that in almost every edition the text differed. Above all things do not imagine that any good work can be done without immense pains. When Dr. Max Müller told Froude, the historian, that he never corrected what he wrote, Froude immediately answered "Unless you correct a great many times, you will never be able to write good English." Now there is good English and good English; and I am not sure that Froude was right. Froude was thinking, I believe, of literary English. Correct English can be written without correction, by dint of long practice in precise writing. Business letters and official documents and various compositions of a kindred sort must be correct English; they are written entirely according to forms and rules, exactly like legal papers in which the mistake of one word might cause unspeakable mischief. But all this has nothing to do with literature. If the art of writing good English or good French or good Japanese were literature, then the lawyers and the bank clerks would represent the highest literature of their respective countries. So far, however, as Froude meant literary English, he is absolutely right. No literature can be produced without much correction. I have told you of primitive literature composed before the time of books and of grammars, which was and is, and will long continue to be, unrivalled literature. But do you suppose that it never was corrected and changed and re-made over and over and over again? Why, most assuredly it was, and corrected not by one only but by thousands and thousands of persons who had learned it by heart. Every generation improved it a little; and at last,

when it came to be written down, it had been polished and perfected by the labour of hundreds of years.

Now I suppose all of you have at some time wanted to get books about how to write English, I suppose that you have all found them, and that the result was only disappointment. It would have been disappointment just the same if you had been looking for French books on how to write French, or German books on how to write German. No books yet exist that will teach you literary work, which will teach you the real secrets of composition. Some day, I trust, there will be such books; but at present there are none, simply because the only men capable of writing them are men who have no time to give to such work. But this having been said, let us return to the subject of Japanese composition. Before trying to give you some practical rules, let me assure you of one thing, that all your foreign studies can be of no literary use to you except in relation to your own tongue. You can not write, you will never be able to write, English literature or French literature or German literature, though you might be able, after years of practice and foreign travel, to write tolerably correct English or French or German—to write a business document, for example, or to write a simple essay dealing only with bare facts. But none of you can hope to be eloquent in any other tongue than your own, or to move the hearts of people by writing in a language which is not your own. There are very few examples in all English literature of a man able to write equally well in two languages—in French and in English for example, close as are these tongues to each other. With an oriental language for a mother tongue, the only hope of being able to create literature in a foreign language is in totally forgetting your own. But the result would not be worth the sacrifice.

I suppose that many of you will become authors, either by accident or by inclination; and if you produce literature,

prose or verse, it is to be hoped that you will influence the future literature of your country, by infusing into the work those new ideas which a university course must have forced upon you by thousands. But this alone, this imparting of new ideas, of larger knowledge, would not be literature. Literature is not scholarship, though it may contain scholarship. Literature means, as I have said before, the highest possible appeal of language to the higher emotions and the nobler sentiments. It is not learning, nor can it be made by any rules of learning.

And now we can turn to the practical side of the subject.

I begin by asking you to remember that the principles of literary composition of the highest class must be exactly the same for Japan or for France or for England or for any other country. These principles are of two kinds, elimination and addition—in other words, a taking away or getting rid of the unnecessary, and the continual strengthening of the necessary. Besides this, composition means very little indeed. The first thing needed, of course, is a perfect knowledge of your own tongue as spoken; I will not say as written, for a perfect knowledge of any tongue as written is possible only to scholarship, and is not at all essential to literature. But a knowledge of the living speech, in all its forms, high and low, common and uncommon, is very desirable. If one can not hope to obtain the knowledge of the whole spoken speech, then I should advise him to throw his strength into the study of a part only, the part that is most natural to him. Even with this partial knowledge excellent literature is possible. But full knowledge will produce larger results in the case of large talent.

II

In all this lecture you must not forget my definition of literature as an art of emotional expression. And the first thing to be considered is the emotion itself, its value, its

fugitive subtlety, and the extreme difficulty of "getting hold of it."

You might ask why I put the emotion before the sensation. Of course the sensation always precedes the emotion. The sensation means the first impression received from the senses, or the revival in memory of such an impression. The emotion is the feeling, very complex, that follows the sensation or impression. Do not forget this distinction; for it is very important indeed.

Now the reason why I am not going to say much to you about the sensation, is that if a sensation could be accurately described in words, the result would be something like a photograph, nothing more. You might say, a coloured photograph; and it is true that if we discover (as we shall certainly some day discover) the art of photographing in colours, such a coloured photograph would represent almost exactly a visual impression. But this would not be art. A photograph is not art; and the nearer that a painting resembles a photograph by its accuracy, the less it is likely to be worth much from the artistic point of view. To describe sensations would be no more literature in the higher sense, than a photograph could be called art in the higher sense. I shall therefore boldly take the position that literature is not a picture of sensations, but of emotions.

All this must be very fully illustrated. When I say "emotion" you perhaps think of tears, sorrow, regret. But this would be a mistake. Let us begin by considering the very simplest kind of emotion—the emotion of a tree.

Two things happen when you look at a tree. First you have the picture of the tree reflected upon the brain through the medium of sight—that is to say, a little card picture, a little photograph of the tree. But even if you wanted to paint this image with words you could not do it; and if you could do it, the result would not be worth talking about. But almost as quickly, you receive a second impression, very different from the first. You observe that the tree gives

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you a peculiar feeling of some kind. The tree has a certain character, and this perception of the character of the tree, is the feeling or the emotion of the tree. That is what the artist looks for; and that is what the poet looks for.

But we must explain this a little more. Every object, animate or inanimate, causes a certain feeling within the person who observes it. Everything has a face. Whenever you meet a person for the first time, and look at the face of that person, you receive an impression that is immediately followed by some kind of feeling. Either you like the face, or you dislike it, or it leaves in you a state of comparative indifference. We all know this in regard to faces; but only the artist and poet know it in regard to things. And the difference between the great artist and the great poet and the rest of the world is only that the artist or the poet perceives the face of things, what is called the physiognomy of things—that is to say, their character. A tree, a mountain, a house, even a stone has a face and a character for the artistic eye. And we can train ourselves to see that character by pursuing the proper methods.

Now suppose that I were to ask all of you to describe for me a certain tree in the garden of the University. I should expect that a majority among you would write very nearly the same thing. But would this be a proof that the tree had given to all of you the same kind of feeling? No, it would not mean anything of the sort. It would mean only that a majority among you had acquired habits of thinking and writing which are contrary to the principles of art. Most of you would describe the tree in nearly the same way, because, in the course of years of study, your minds have been filled with those forms of language commonly used to describe trees; you would remember the words of some famous poet or story-teller, and would use them as expressing your own feelings. But it is perfectly certain that they would not express your own feelings. Education usually teaches us to use the ideas and the language of other men

to describe our own feelings, and this habit is exactly contrary to every principle of art.

Now suppose there is one among you of a remarkably powerful talent of the poetical and artistic kind. His description of the tree would be startlingly different from that of the rest of you; it would surprise you all, so that you would have to look at the tree again in order to see whether the description was true. Then you would be still more astonished to find that it was much more true than any other; and then you would not only discover that he had enabled you to understand the tree in a new way, but also that the rest of you had but half seen it, and that your descriptions were all wrong. He would not have used the words of other men to describe the tree; he would have used his own, and they would be very simple words indeed, like the words of a child.

For the child is incomparably superior to the average man in seeing the character of things; and the artist sees like the child. If I were to ask twenty little children—say, five or six years old—to look at the same tree that we were talking about, and to tell me what they think of it, I am sure that many of them would say wonderful things. They would come much nearer to the truth than the average university student, and this just because of their absolute innocence. To the child's imagination everything is alive—stones, trees, plants, even household objects. For him everything has a soul. He sees things quite differently from the man. Nor is this the only reason for the superiority of the child's powers of observation. His instinctive knowledge, the knowledge inherited from millions of past lives, is still fresh, not dulled by the weight of the myriad impressions of education and personal experience. Ask a child, for example, what he thinks of a certain stranger. He will look and say "I like him," or "I dislike him." Should you ask, "Why do you dislike that man?" the child, after some difficulty, will tell you that he does not like something in

his face. Press the little fellow further to explain, and after a long and painful effort he will suddenly come out with a comparison of startling truth that will surprise you, showing that he has perceived something in the face that you did not see. This same instinctive power is the real power of the artist, and it is the power that distinguishes literature from mere writing. You will now better understand what I meant by saying that education will not teach a person how to make poetry, any more than a reading of books could teach a man how to make a table or a chair. The faculty of artistic seeing is independent of education, and must be cultivated outside of education. Education has not made great writers. On the contrary, they have become great in spite of education. For the effect of education is necessarily to deaden and dull those primitive and instinctive feelings upon which the higher phases of emotional art depend. Knowledge can only be gained in most cases at the expense of certain very precious natural faculties. The man who is able to keep the freshness of the child in his mind and heart, notwithstanding all the knowledge that he absorbs, that is the man who is likely to perform great things in literature.

Now we have clearly defined what I mean by the feeling or emotion which the artist in literature must seek to catch and express. We took the simplest example possible, a tree. But everything, and every fancy, and every being to be treated of in literature must be considered in precisely the same way. In all cases the object of the writer should be to seize and fix the character of the thing, and he can do this only by expressing the exact feeling that the thing has produced in his mind. This is the main work of literature. It is very difficult. But why it is difficult we have not yet considered.

What happens when the feeling comes? You feel then a momentary thrill of pleasure or pain or fear or wonder; but this thrill passes away almost as suddenly as it comes.

You can not write it down as fast as it vanishes. You are left then only with the sensation or first impression of the thing in your mind, and a mere memory of the feeling. In different natures the feeling is different, and it lasts longer in some than in others; but in all cases it passes away as rapidly as smoke, or perfume blown by a wind. If you think that anybody can put down on paper this feeling exactly as it is received, immediately upon receiving it, you are much mistaken. This can be accomplished only by arduous labour. The labour is to revive the feeling.

At first you will be exactly in the condition of a person trying to remember a dream after waking up. All of us know how difficult it is to remember a dream. But by the help of the sensation, which was received during sleep, the feeling may be revived. My recommendation would be in such a case to write down immediately, as fully as you can, the circumstances and the cause of the emotion, and to try to describe the feeling as far as possible. It makes no difference then whether you write at all grammatically, nor whether you finish your sentences, nor whether you write backwards or forwards. The all-essential thing is to have notes of the experience. These notes should be the seed from which the plant will be made to grow and to blossom.

Reading over these quick notes, you will perceive that the feeling is faintly revived by them, especially by certain parts of them. But of course, except to you, the notes would still be of no possible value. The next work is to develop the notes, to arrange them in their natural order, and to construct the sentences in a correct way. While doing this you will find that a number of things come back to your mind which you had forgotten while making the notes. The development of the notes is likely to be four or five times longer, perhaps even ten times longer, than were the notes themselves. But now, reading over the new writing, you find that the feeling is not revived by it; the feeling has entirely vanished, and what you have written is

likely to seem commonplace enough. A third writing you will find to better both the language and the thought, but perhaps the feeling does not revive. A fourth and a fifth writing will involve an astonishing number of changes. For while engaged in this tiresome work, you are sure to find that a number of things which you have already written are not necessary, and you will also find that the most important things remaining have not been properly developed at all. While you are doing the work over again, new thoughts come; the whole thing changes shape, begins to be more compact, more strong and simple; and at last, to your delight, the feeling revives—nay, revives more strongly than at first, being enriched by new psychological relations. You will be surprised at the beauty of what you have done; but you must not trust the feeling then. Instead of immediately printing the thing, I should advise you to put it into a drawer, and leave it there for at least a month, without looking at it again. When you re-read it after this interval, you are certain to find that you can perfect it a great deal more. After one or two further remodellings it will be perhaps the very best that you can do, and will give to others the same emotion that you yourself felt on first perceiving the fact or the object. The process is very much like that of focusing with a telescope. You know that you must pull the tubing out a little further, or push it in a little further, and then pull it again and then push it again many times before you can get the sharpest possible view of a distant object. Well, the literary artist has to do with language what the sight-seer must do with a telescope. And this is the first thing essential in any kind of literary composition. It is drudgery, I know; but there is no escape from it. Neither Tennyson, nor Rossetti, nor anybody else of great importance in English literature has been able to escape from it within our own day. Long practice will not lighten this labour in the least. Your methods may become incomparably more skilful; but the

actual volume of work will always be about the same.

I imagine that some of you might ask: "Is there no other way of expressing emotion or sentiment than that which you have been trying to describe to us? You say that the highest literature is emotional expression; but there is nothing more difficult than the work you have suggested; is there no other way?"

Yes, there is another way, and a way which I sometimes imagine is more in harmony with the character of the Japanese genius, and perhaps with the character of the Japanese language. But it is just as difficult; and it has this further disadvantage that it requires immense experience, as well as a very special talent. It is what has been called the impersonal method, though I am not sure that this title is a good one. Very few great writers have been able to succeed at it; and I think that these few have mostly been Frenchmen. And it is a method suitable only for prose.

An emotion may be either expressed or suggested. If it is difficult to express, it is at least quite as difficult to suggest; but if you can suggest it, the suggestion is apt to be even more powerful than the expression, because it leaves much more to the imagination. Of course you must remember that all literary art must be partly suggestive—do not forget that. But by the impersonal method, as it has been called, it becomes altogether suggestive. There is no expression of emotion by the writer at all—that is to say, by the narrator. Nevertheless the emotion comes as you read, and comes with extraordinary power. There is only one very great writer of our own times who succeeded perfectly by this method—that was Guy de Maupassant.

A number of facts may be related, quite dispassionately and plainly, in such a manner as to arouse very great feeling; or a conversation may be so reported as to convey to the mind the exact feelings of the speakers, and even to suggest every look or action without any description at all. But you will see at once that the great difficulty here lies

not so much in the choice of word values (although that also is indispensable) as in the choice of facts. You must become a perfect judge of the literary worth—I mean the emotional value—of the simplest fact in itself. Now a man who can make such judgments must have had a vast experience of life. He must have the dramatic faculty greatly developed. He must know the conversational peculiarities of the language of all classes. He must be able to group men and women by types. And I doubt very much whether any person can do this while he is young. In most cases the talent and capacity for it can develop only in middle life, because it is only by that time that a person could have the proper experience. Therefore I could not recommend an attempt to follow this method at the beginning of a literary career, though I should strongly recommend every conceivable cultivation of the powers which may render it possible. Remember that in addition to experience it requires a natural faculty of perception as vivid as that of a painter. I have mentioned one name only in relation to this kind of work, but I should also call your attention to such stories as those of Prosper Mérimée—"Carmen," "Matteo Falcone." Occasionally you will find stories by Daudet, especially the little stories of the war between France and Germany, showing the method in question. But in these the style is usually somewhat mixed; there is some description attempted, showing a personal feeling. In the best work of Maupassant and of Mérimée, the personal element entirely disappears. There is no description, except in some conversational passages put into the mouth of another person; there are only facts, but they are facts that "take you by the throat," to use a familiar expression.

I am sure that you are not yet quite satisfied by these definitions, or attempts at definitions, of the two working methods. I suppose that there are among you some good writers capable of writing in a few weeks, or even in a few days, a story which, if published in a Japanese periodical,

would please thousands of readers, and would bring tears perhaps to many eyes. I do not doubt your powers to please the public, to excite their emotions, to strengthen their best sentiments; and I have said that it is the office of literature to do this. But if you ask me whether I would call this work literature, I should answer "No; that is journalism. It is work which has been quickly, and therefore imperfectly done. It is only the ore of literature; it is not literature in the true sense." But you will say, "The public calls it literature, accepts it as literature, pays for it as literature—what more do you want?"

I can best explain by an illustration. Next to the Greeks, the Arabs were perhaps the most skilful of poets and artists in describing beauty in words. Every part of the body had a beauty of a special kind; and this special beauty had a special name. Furthermore all beauty was classified, ranked. If a woman belonged to the first rank of beauty, she was called by a particular name, signifying that when you saw her the first time you were startled, and that every time that you looked at her again after that, she seemed to become more and more and more beautiful until you doubted the reality of your own senses. A woman who belonged only to the second class of beauty, would charm you quite as much the first time that you saw her; but after that, when you looked at her again you would find that she was not so beautiful as you had thought at first. As for women of the third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh classes of beauty, it is only necessary to say that the same rule held good; more and more defects would show themselves, according to the class, upon familiarity. Now the difference between cheap emotional literature of the journalistic sort and true literature, is exactly of the same kind. Cheap literature pays best for the time being, and great literature scarcely pays at all. But a great story written by a master seems more and more beautiful every time that you read it over again; and through generations and centuries it seems to be

more and more beautiful to those who read it. But cheap literature, although it pleases even more the first time that it was read, shows defects upon a second reading, and more defects upon a third reading, and still more upon a fourth reading, until the appearance of the defects spoils all the pleasure of the reader, and he throws away the book or the story in disgust. So do the public act in the long run. What pleases them today they throw away tomorrow; and they are right in throwing it away, because it does not represent careful work.

One more general observation may be made, though you should remember that all general statements involve exceptions. But bearing this in mind, it is not too much to say that what are called classics in any language are classics because they represent perfect workmanship, and that books which are not classics usually represent imperfect workmanship.

III

The next subject to consider will be construction—that is to say, the architecture of the composition, the first rules for putting the thing together.

The most common difficulty of literary work is how to begin. Everybody, all over the world, is troubled just this way. A boy is, to whom you give a subject and tell him to write about it. How shall I begin? The greatest poets, the greatest essayists, the greatest dramatists are not all superior to this weakness. They all have to ask themselves the same question at times. The beginning is the difficulty. But the experienced learn how to avoid it. I believe that most of them avoid the trouble of beginning by very simple means.

What means?

By not beginning at all.

This may require a little explanation. In the old days there were rules for beginning, just as there were rules for

everything else. Literature was subjected to the same imposition of rhetoric as were other compositions. We shall have more to say about this when we come to the subject of style. In history, in the critical essay, above all in philosophy, a beginning is very necessary. Scope and plan must be determined beforehand. You must know what you want to say, and how you intend to say it, and how much space will be required for saying it. Serious and solid work of the purely intellectual kind must be done according to a fixed and logical method. I am sure that I need not explain why. But it is quite otherwise in regard to poetry and other forms of emotional and imaginative literature. The poet or the story-teller never gets the whole of his inspiration at once; it comes to him only by degrees, while he is perfecting the work. His first inspiration is only a sudden flash of emotion, or the sudden shock of a new idea, which at once awakens and sets into motion many confused trains of other interrelated emotions and ideas. It ought to be obvious, therefore, that the first inspiration might represent not the beginning of anything, but the middle of it, or the end.

I was startled some years ago in Kyoto while watching a Japanese artist drawing horses. He drew the horses very well; but he always began at the tail. Now it is the Western rule to begin at the head of the horse; that is why I was surprised. But upon reflection, it struck me, that it could not really make any difference whether the artist begins at the head or the tail or the belly or the foot of the horse, if he really knows his business. And most great artists who really know their business do not follow other people's rules. They make their own rules. Every one of them does his work in a way peculiar to himself; and the peculiarity means only that he finds it more easy to work in that way. Now the very same thing is true in literature. And the question, "How shall I begin?" only means that you want to begin at the head instead of beginning at the tail or somewhere else.

That is, you are not yet experienced enough to trust to your own powers. When you become more experienced you will never ask the question; and I think that you will often begin at the tail—that is to say, you will write the end of the story before you have even thought of the beginning.

The working rule is this: Develop the first idea or emotion that comes to you before you allow yourself to think about the second. The second will suggest itself, even too much, while you are working at the first. If two or three or four valuable emotions or ideas come to you about the same time, take the most vigorous of them, or the one that most attracts you to begin with, unless it happens to be also the most difficult. For the greater number of young writers I should say, follow the line of least resistance, and take the easiest work first. It does not matter at all whether it is to belong to the middle or to the end or to the beginning of a story or poem. By developing the different parts or verses separately from each other, you will soon discover this astonishing fact, that they have a tendency to grow together of themselves, and into a form different from that which you first intended, but much better. This is the inspiration of form as construction. And if you try always to begin at the beginning, you are very likely to miss this inspiration. The literary law is, let the poem or the story shape itself. Do not try to shape it before it is nearly done. The most wonderful work is not the work that the author shapes and plans; it is the work that shapes itself, the work that obliges him, when it is nearly done, to change it all from beginning to end, and to give it a construction which he had never imagined at the time of beginning it.

You will see that these rules, results of practical experience, and perfectly well known to men of letters in every country of Europe, are exactly the opposite of the rules taught in schools and universities. The student is always told how to begin, and always puzzles himself about a beginning. But the men who make literature, the poets, the

great story-tellers of the highest rank—they never begin. At least, they never begin at the beginning according to rule; they draw their horses from the hoof or the tail much more often than from the head.

That is all that I have to say about construction. You may think this is very little. I reply that it is quite enough. Instinct and habit will teach all the rest; and they are better masters than all grammarians and rhetoricians. What a man can not learn by literary instinct, and can not acquire by literary habit, he will never, never be able to obtain from rules or books. I am afraid that some of these opinions may seem very heretical, but I must now be guilty of a much greater heresy, when I introduce you to my ideas about style. I think—in fact I feel quite sure—that everything which has been written upon the subject of style is absolute nonsense, because it mistakes results for causes. I hold that such writing has done immense injury to the literary student in every part of the world; and I propose to prove to you that there is no such thing as style.

IV

I suppose you will ask me, "Why do you talk to us about the styles of Macaulay and Burke and Ruskin, if you do not believe that there is such a thing as style?" I will answer that it is my duty in lectures to explain as far as I can the reasons why different writers are valued; and in order to do this I must use the word "style" because it is customary, and because it indicates something. But the general notion attaching to that something is wrong. What was called "style" no longer exists. What is called "style" ought to be called something else—I should say "character."

If you look at the dictionary you will find various definitions of the word "style," but all these can be reduced to two. The first, or general style, is simply rhetorical; it means the

construction of sentences according to a complete set of rules, governing the form and proportion of every part of the sentence. This once was style. There was a time when everybody was supposed to write according to the same rules, and in almost exactly the same way. We might expect that work done by different individuals according to such rules would be all very much alike; and as a matter of fact, there was a great likeness in the styles of French and English writers during the time that classical rules of composition were in force. I suppose you know that by classical I mean rules obtained from study of the Greek and Latin writers. The effort of Western men of letters during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was to imitate the old classics. So they had rules and measures for everything, for every part of a sentence, and for the position of every word. Therefore the styles did greatly resemble each other. In France the similarity I refer to was greater than in England, the French being a more perfect language, and much closer to Latin than English. For example, you would find it very hard to distinguish the style of a story written by Diderot from the style of a story written by Voltaire. The Encyclopedists, as they are called, wrote very much after the same fashion. But a fine critic could detect differences, nevertheless. For no matter how exact the rules might be, the way of obeying them would differ according to differences of character, mental character; I need scarcely tell you that no two minds think and feel in exactly the same way. These differences of individual thinking and feeling necessarily give a slightly different tone to the work of each writer, even in the most rigid period of classical style. And this difference of tone is what we call style today—after the old classical rules have been given up. But there is still much popular error upon the subject of individual style. People think still with the ideas of the eighteenth century. They think that there are rules for individual style, because there are rules for classical

style. They think that when we talk of the style of Macaulay or Froude, of Arnold or of De Quincey, we mean certain rules of composition by which the literary method of one man can be known from that of another. I should like to see any man living attempt to define these rules. The authors themselves could not define them. There are no such rules. This is altogether an error—and a very serious error. The differences are not due to any definable rules at all; they are due entirely to individual differences of character. And therefore I say that style, in the modern meaning of the word, is character.

This remains to be proved. Let us see what any author's style means today. It means that his method of constructing sentences differs appreciably from the method in which other men construct their sentences. And how is the difference shown? Chiefly in three ways:

1. By a certain metrical form of sentence peculiar to the writer.

2. By a certain quality of sound—sonority—in the sentence, not due merely to measure, but to a sense of the musical value of words.

3. By choice of words giving particular impressions of force or colour.

Now how can we define and illustrate these three peculiarities in any writer? I say that it cannot be done. One might, as Mr. Saintsbury did, take some sentences from the Bible, or from any volume of rich prose, and arrange the sentences so as to show their measure and accent, by the same means that the accent and measure of poetry can be shown. But even thus the cadences could not be shown. In order to show the cadence we should have to adopt the suggestion of a very clever American man-of-letters, Sidney Lanier, and set the sentence to music—I mean write it with a musical notation above every word, in addition to the use of accents and feet. So much might be done. But there would still remain the impossible task of defining an author's

conception of word values. Words are very much like lizards; they change colour according to position. Two different writers using the same word to express the same idea can give to that word two entirely different characters, for much depends upon the place of the word in the sentence, or, in simpler language, upon the combination to which it belongs. And all this work is more or less unconscious on the author's part. He chooses not by rule, but by feeling, by what is called the literary instinct. Attempts have been made to define differences of this kind as exhibited in the styles of different authors by counting and classifying the verbs and adjectives and adverbs used by each. These attempts resulted in nothing at all. The same thing has been tried in regard to poetry. How many times Tennyson uses the adjective "red" and how many times Swinburne uses the adjective "red" may be interesting to know; but it will not help us in the least to understand why the value of the same adjective as Tennyson uses it is quite different from the value it obtains as used by Swinburne. All such differences must be due to psychological differences; therefore again I say that style is character.

And here let me utter a word of warning as to the uselessness of trying to study "style" in modern English authors. I have often been asked by students whom they should read for the study of style—and other questions of that kind, showing that they did not understand what style really is. I must even venture to say that no Japanese student who has not spent a great many years away from Japan, can possibly understand differences of foreign style. The reason must be obvious. To appreciate differences of style in foreign authors, you must have an absolutely perfect knowledge of the foreign language; you must know all its capacities of rhythm, accent, sonority, and colour. You must know the comparative values of one hundred thousand words—and that for you is impossible. Therefore, so far as foreign literature is concerned, do not trouble yourselves

trying to understand anything about style which does not depend upon old forms of rhetoric. And even if you should learn enough of the old rules to understand all the rules and sub-rules for the construction of an eighteenth century sentence, the want of training in Greek and Latin would make that knowledge almost useless to you. Style can be studied by you only in a very vague way. But I hold that way to be the most important, because it means character. What I have just said is, of course, a digression, because it is of Japanese and not of English composition that I am now going to speak.

Here you must recognize that I am sadly hampered by my absolute ignorance of the Japanese language. There are many things that I should like to talk to you about which it is out of my power to talk of for this reason. But there are general facts, independent of differences of language; and I believe that by keeping to those I shall not speak altogether in vain. In Japanese, or in any other language, the style of the writer ought to represent character, if any style, except a purely conventional one, be possible. And now what I want to say is this: If any writer does his best to perfect his work, the result of the pains that he takes will be style in the true sense. That is, his work will have an individuality, a character about it, differentiating it from all other work on the same subject. It will be recognizably his, just as much as his face or his way of talking belongs to him and not to anybody else. But just in the same degree to which he does not take pains there will be less evidence of character, therefore less style. The work of many clumsy people will be found to have a general family resemblance. The work of the truly energetic and painstaking will be found to differ prodigiously. The greater the earnestness and the labour, the more marked the style. And now you will see what I am coming at—that style is the outcome of character developed through hard work. Style is nothing else than that in any country.

Here observe another fact. In the general history of literature, wherever we find a uniformity of style, we find no progress, and no very great literary achievements. The classic period of the English eighteenth century is an example. But the reverse is the case when general style disappears and individual style develops. That means high development, originality, new ideas, everything that signifies literary progress. Now one bad sign in the English literature of the close of the present century—that is, the English literature of today—is that style has almost disappeared. There is a general style again, as there was in the first part of the eighteenth century. Out of a hundred English novels published this month, you would scarcely be able to tell the difference between one author's writing and another's. The great stylists are dead, except Ruskin, and he has ceased to write. The world of fiction is again governed by a set of rules which everybody follows; and novel writing, as well as essay writing (with rare exceptions), has become a trade instead of an art. Therefore nothing great appears, and nothing great is likely to appear until a reaction sets in. There is of course the extraordinary genius of Kipling, who keeps aloof from all conventions, and has made new styles of his own in almost every department of pure literature. But there is no other to place beside him, and he probably owes his development quite as much to the fact that he was born in India as to his really astonishing talent. And this brings me to the last section of this lecture—the subject of language. One fact of Kipling's work, and not the least striking fact, is the astonishing use which he has made of the language of the people. Although a consummate master of serious and dignified style when he pleases to be, he never hesitates to speak the speech of the streets when he finds that it serves his purpose better. Well, remember that Emerson once said, "The speech of the street is incomparably more forceful than the speech of the academy."

V

I now hope that you will have a little patience with me, as I am going to speak against conventions. I believe that Japanese literature is still to a great extent in its classic state, that it has not yet freed itself from the conventions of other centuries, and that the full capacities of the language are not expressed in its modern productions. I believe that to write in the vernacular, the every day speech of conversation and of the people, is still considered vulgar. And I must venture to express the hope that you will eventually fight boldly against these conventions. I think that it is absolutely essential. I do not believe that any new Japanese literature can come into existence, and influence life and thought and national character, and create for Japan what she very much needs, literary sympathy, until Japan has authors who will not be afraid to write in the true tongue of the people. One thing is certain, that the change must come. Whoever helps it to come will be doing his country an inestimable service, for so long as literature is shaped only to the understanding of a special class of educated persons, it cannot influence the nation at all. The educated classes of any country represent but a very small portion of the great whole. They must be the teachers; yet they can not teach in the language of the academy. They must teach in the language of the people, just as Wycliffe, and Chaucer, and other great Englishmen of letters once found it necessary to do in order to create a new public opinion. Japan will certainly need a new popular literature; and although you may say that a certain class of popular literature is furnished by a certain class of writers, I would answer that a great popular literature cannot be furnished by uneducated persons, or by persons without a large range of knowledge; it must be furnished by scholars, or at least by men of taste, who are willing to speak to the

masses in their mother tongue, and who care to touch the hearts of the millions. This is the true object of literature in any country. And so far as literary expression is power, think of what is lost by allowing that power to be cramped in the same way that English literature was cramped a hundred years ago. Here is a man who can delight ten or twenty thousand readers of culture, but who can not be more than a name to the nation at large. Here is another man who can speak to forty millions of people at once, making himself equally well understood by the minister in his office and by the peasant in his rice-field. Who is the greatest force? Who is able to do most for the future of his country? Who represents the greatest power? Certainly it is not the man who pleases only twenty thousand people. It is the man who, like the young English poet already mentioned, can speak to all his countrymen in the world at the same time, and with such power that everybody both feels and understands. Recently when the Russian emperor proposed disarmament of the European powers, our young poet sent to the London *Times* a little poem about a bear—a treacherous bear. There is no part of the English speaking world in which the poem was not read; and I am quite sure that it had much more effect on English public opinion than the message of the Emperor of Russia. That is power. The man who can speak to a hundred millions of people may be stronger than a king. But he must not speak in the language of the academy.

CHAPTER IV

NOTE UPON THE ABUSE AND THE USE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES

As I have been asked, on various occasions, to express an opinion as to the use of literary societies, as well as asked to join some of them, I have been thinking that a short lecture, embodying my beliefs upon the subject, might be of use to you. It is not at all necessary that you should approve my opinions; but I am sure that you will find them worth thinking about, because they are based upon something better than any experience of my own—the experience and the teaching of really wise men. Let me begin, then, by saying that I am strongly opposed to the existence of most literary societies, and that I believe such societies may do very considerable injury to young talents.

There is a general principle, especially insisted upon by Herbert Spencer in his Sociology, which applies to the world of literature just as much as it does to the world of political economy, or the world of industrialism. That principle is this: whatever can be done by the individual in the best way possible, is not work for a society to attempt, unless this society can greatly improve the work of the individual. You know that sociologists are never tired of pointing out that, even in the case of private companies and state undertakings, the private companies invariably do the better work. Of course the larger social questions connected with competition, lie outside of my province; I am reminding you of them, but I have no wish to dwell upon them. Only remember that the general principle is applicable to all forms of human work and effort. Co-operation is valuable only when it can accomplish what is beyond the power of the individual. When it can not accomplish this, it is much more likely to make mischief or

to act as a check than to do any good. One reason for this is very simple—co-operation is unfavourable to personal freedom of thought or action. If you work with a crowd, you must try to obey the opinions of the majority; you must act in harmony with those about you. How very unfavourable to literary originality such a condition would prove, we shall presently have reason to see.

But first let me observe that all kinds of literary societies are not to be indiscriminately condemned. Some literary societies are very useful, and have accomplished great services to literature, by doing for literature what no individual could possibly do. For example, in England societies have been formed for the editing and publishing of valuable old texts. The Early English Text Society is an example, one of perhaps a score. No one man could have done the work of this society, nor the work of the Percy Text Society, nor the work of a dozen others of which you have undoubtedly heard. Such work requires a great deal of money, such as very few even rich men could spare, and it requires a vast amount of labour, beyond the capacity of any single person. Now in these cases hundreds of people contribute money to support the work, and dozens of scholars are thus enabled to concentrate their efforts in a single direction. It would be folly to say that societies of this kind are not of the very highest value. But they are valuable only because they do what individual effort could not do.

Again, societies formed in colleges and in universities, for the purpose of encouraging literary effort, or debating, or any other beginnings in the great arts of composition or of eloquence, are certainly to be recommended. They are to be recommended because they stimulate the novice to do many things which he might not have self-confidence to attempt without encouragement. How many a student must have first discovered his own abilities in the direction of oratory or poetry or fiction, through the stimulus that

his college society first gave him. He thought that he could not make a speech, but one day, much against his will, he found that the opinion of his fellow students compelled him to make a speech, and the result was that he proved to be better qualified than others to do what he had imagined impossible. So with the first efforts in many directions. The majority forces us to make them; and in such instances the influence of the majority is to develop individual power. But I will still say that here the value of such societies begins and ends. There are wonderful societies of this kind in all the great colleges and universities of the world; and they help to develop the first budding of talent, the first literary and artistic ambition. But the best of them never produce anything great. They work with raw material; the very best things published by students of the great English universities, for example, are always somewhat immature. If we acknowledge that some stimulus of a healthy kind is given to literary ambition by this form of co-operation, then we grant about all that can be granted.

Once that the individual mind blossoms and develops, from that moment the influence of societies ceases to be a benefit, and threatens to become an injury. The very same social opinion that compelled and encouraged the first effort would almost certainly oppose itself to further development after a certain fixed degree. The early encouragement might be voiced in some such persuasion as this: "Try to show yourself as clever as the rest of us." But at a later time, the like social opinion would certainly declare, "You must not be eccentric and think so differently from the rest of us. If you do think that way, please do not express your opinions, for they will not be tolerated." I am putting the case rather strongly, of course. But the second form of address just quoted is really that form of address which the world uses to every kind of original talent. The world is not nearly so liberal, generous, appreciative, as the literary societies of colleges and of universities. Public

opinion is above all things conservative in almost every direction in which original talent aims. Instinctively it attempts to block every departure from conventional ways of thought and action. And any mature society of a certain average size is pretty sure to represent public opinion in a strong form. It will therefore be much more likely to act as a strangling power than as a developing power. I would venture to say, however, that the proper conditions of literary independence and mutual encouragement in a literary society must depend very much upon the number of its members. And I should put the number very low—so low that I think you will be rather surprised at the statement. I do not think that a literary society of the sort to which I have referred, should consist at any time of more than two or three persons. Combinations of three have been proved both possible and beneficial. Any larger figure, even four, I should think dangerous. And the combination of three should be, I think, a combination of differences, not of similarities. The durability of the brotherhood would depend upon mutual appreciation, not upon unity of idealism or singleness of opinion. But naturally this question comes up, "Can we call a fraternity of three persons a literary society?" Perhaps not; yet I firmly believe that any larger combination of individuals for a literary purpose would not accomplish any good, and should not be formed, except for such purposes as that of giving financial aid. Now I shall try to explain why.

Experience among professional men of letters tends to show that there is but one way, one influence, through which they can really assist each other toward the realization of higher things—that is, friendship and sympathy. Friendship, real friendship, admits of perfect freedom between mind and mind, perfect frankness, perfect understanding, and therefore complete sympathy. But the conditions of human nature are such that, even among common minds, perfect friendship can seldom extend to any con-

siderable number of persons. So there is a Spanish proverb on the subject, which is worth quoting:

> Compania de uno, compania ninguno;
> Compania de dos, compania de Dios,
> Compania de tres, compania es;
> Compania de cuatro, compania de Diablo.

Which is to say, one is no company; two is God's company; three is company; but four is the Devil's company. Now though it may seem funny, this proverb is really wise, as most Spanish proverbs are; for it signifies that a perfect friendship of more than three has been found very difficult. When four make the company, a division of opinion or feeling is almost certain to result; for two will be apt to unite against one or both of the others, when some vexed question arises. I believe that you must have known this to be true in your own experience. At all events, a literary association made for real and serious literary objects of a high class, can only be beneficial and enduring if built upon friendship and sympathy; and friendship and sympathy of the quality needed can not be expected from a combination of more than three.

Perhaps you will think of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, and other societies. But now that we have full details about these societies, we find that they were societies in name rather than in fact. The Pre-Raphaelite society existed only by groups of three, and these groups touched each other only at long intervals. Moreover, the only thing that kept the threes affiliated even by the thinnest of threads, was a certain business necessity. I believe you will find in the history of English literature that nearly all great men have been solitary workers, and have had remarkably few friends. Certainly this has been the case in modern times. I can not think of any way in which a literary combination could be of serious value to a serious literary worker, except in the manner that I have indicated.

You will perhaps remember that in England and in America there are thousands of "literary societies," that almost every country town has a literary society of some kind; indeed, I might remark that even in Yokohama and in Kobe the foreign merchants have made a "literary society." But it does not at all follow that these societies are literary because they are called literary. Do not be deceived by this fact of the popularity of literary societies in England and elsewhere. Such societies are formed for purposes of which the average student has no idea. They are formed for purely social purposes, to bring young men and women together, to enable parents to marry their daughters, to enable small musicians or small poets or popular journalists to obtain a little social influence. I do not care how big the society may be, that is the real end of it. There is a little music, a little speaking, a common-place essay. Then there is a great deal of introduction and of social gossip. This is only a commonplace and vulgar playing with the subject of literature; it is worse than playing—it is pretending. And I am speaking to superior men, to educated men. As a university man must take literature seriously, he can not be interested in nonsense of the sort which I have been describing, and only as nonsense can the thing exist for him. You do not find real men of letters bothering themselves with societies of that kind.

Now, to sum up, I will say that literary societies of a serious character, such as those formed in universities, and sometimes outside of them, have this value—they will help men to rise up to the general level. Now "the general level" means mediocrity; it can not mean anything else. But young students of either sex, or young persons of sentiment, must begin by rising to mediocrity; they must grow. Therefore I say that such societies give valuable encouragement to young people. But though the societies help you to rise to the general level, they will never help you to rise above it. And therefore I think that the man who

has reached his full intellectual strength can derive no benefit from them. Literature, in the true sense, is not what remains at the general level; it is the exceptional, the extraordinary, the powerful, the unexpected, that soars far above the general level. And therefore I think that a university graduate intending to make literature his profession, should no more hamper himself by belonging to literary societies, than a man intending to climb a mountain should begin by tying a very large stone to the ankle of each foot.

And yet, in spite of what I have said against the serious value of literary societies, I must confess I myself belong to a literary society. But it is really the most sensible society of the kind imaginable. There are no meetings which one is obliged to attend; there is no demand for literary work of any sort; you are not even obliged to know the other members of the society. We make every year a contribution of money; but we must contribute for twenty years and never get anything in return. Then you might ask, what is the use of such a society? It is very useful indeed. Thousands of writers belong to it, but very few of them use it. The object of the society is to provide money for the employment of good lawyers to defend the interests of authors against dishonourable publishers. Authors are generally very poor men, and very easy to take advantage of in business. To go to law with a publisher is out of the power of a poor man, in nine cases out of ten. But if a thousand poor men get together, each to contribute every year a small sum in the interests of right and justice, without asking any direct return for it, then a great deal may be done. As it is, the society employs very skilful lawyers and advisors. If any one member of the society be unjustly treated, all the others thus combine to defend him. Now that is an illustration of what a society really should be formed for—only to do for each of its members what the individuals can not possibly do

for themselves. Otherwise there is absolute independence. No man is obliged to give his time or his work to the society at home; there is no literary labour attempted; all the legal work is done by persons hired by the society. I think that a society of that kind formed with the general object of protecting the interests of Japanese authors, and therefore of protecting the growth of future Japanese literature, would be of great service. But otherwise I can imagine no value to university graduates in a literary society of any sort, containing more than three members.

CHAPTER V

LITERARY GENIUS

(A Fragment)

Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide.

The evidence that genius has some relation to moral weakness is certainly very large. Not only in English literature, but in the literature of all European countries, we find that the names of the great poets are generally associated with stories of unhappy lives and bad morals. In our own lectures upon modern English, you will have noticed that such men as Coleridge and Byron and Shelley were very weak characters, and quite out of harmony with their surroundings. And these great three are examples of hundreds of lesser men who were equally open to reproach, but who were possessed of remarkable literary abilities. Even in the history of English drama, we find that a large proportion of the great names were names of men who could not be considered moral in any sense of the word—Shakespeare being a remarkable exception. French literature tells pretty much the same story, from the time of Villon, who narrowly escaped being hanged, to the time of Baudelaire and of De Nerval, both of whom were partly insane. But probably the proportion of men of genius who have been either insane or bad is not so large as has been supposed. Prejudice must always be taken into consideration where we deal with such criticism. But you will find criticism without prejudice accumulated upon this subject by a Mr. Calton; and the evidence is very strong against the literary men.

The controversy was begun by the work of an Italian man of science, Cesare Lombroso, a professor at Milan.

Lombroso is an evolutionist, and all his lectures are based upon the evolutional philosophy. In his book, "The Man of Genius," he accumulated a great number of facts about the morals of the men of genius; and he inferred from these facts that genius means a kind of insanity, and that it is usually accompanied with physical and moral weakness. He argues, with a great show of reason, that men of genius exhibit in the general character of their acts, not an advance upon the morals of their time, but a reversion to the morals of a former age. He thinks that the criminal in society represents the original savage man, the survival of instincts and tendencies older than civilization. On this subject his evidence and arguments are very strong indeed. But he also regards the man of genius as being in some degree related to the criminal rather than to the moral type of mankind. His book at once inspired a German writer, Max Nordau, to compose a popular work on the same topic. Nordau's object would seem to have been to please the great middle class, the conventional class *par excellence*, who are usually incapable of understanding genius, but are quite delighted to find something bad to say about anybody who, while disobeying conventions, yet manages to attract the attention of superior men. When you find that a person whom you dislike is undeniably clever—is able to do something which you cannot possibly do, you have a certain satisfaction in knowing or believing that his higher ability is the result of some miserable disease. Nothing flatters and pleases mediocrity more than to be able to disparage superiority. In other words, Nordau's book was an appeal to all the prejudices and meannesses of the half-educated; and it had an immense sale. It is still popular; the dullards of society have been fully convinced by it that men of genius are very contemptible persons, in most cases, probably immoral, and usually degenerate.

Nordau is not a man of science; he is simply a clever and cunning journalist, who knew how to make money by a

misuse of Lombroso's facts. What about the facts themselves? How much truth are we to allow them? I think that a reference to Spencer's "Psychology" would have settled the whole question so far as the evolution matter is concerned. The "eccentricity of genius," as Spencer calls it, really represents two things; the opinions of Lombroso err chiefly in the direction of one-sidedness. The two things represented by the eccentricity of genius are likely to be higher developments and degeneration—two opposites. The average man of genius is likely to be superior to other men in one faculty, and inferior to other men in other faculties. The reason is that genius can only be produced at a tremendous cost to the vital energy of the being in whom it exists. There are for this several reasons, which I shall try to explain in the easiest way possible.

Let us first take it for granted, as we must do scientifically, that every being starts into existence with a certain quantity of what I may call life-force. The force may differ considerably in different men, but there must be a general average. Let us say that this average force would under ordinary circumstances enable a man weighing a hundred and fifty pounds, standing five feet and eight inches, possessing good blood and faculties, to live under comfortable circumstances to the age of eighty. This fact you will perceive is quite easy to understand. The life-force, however, is influenced by tendencies that we know very little about, hereditary tendencies. According to these, it may act more in one direction than in another. It has only so much material to work with; it may make out of that material a great many different things or differences in things.

CHAPTER VI

ON MODERN ENGLISH CRITICISM, AND THE CONTEMPORARY RELATIONS OF ENGLISH TO FRENCH LITERATURE

NOTHING is more important for the student who loves literature than to become intimately acquainted with its great critics; for they alone can guide him in his judgments, can teach him to distinguish and classify merit, and can ultimately enable him to estimate literary values for himself. There are critics and critics; hundreds of them are useless, even mischievous; the great ones alone are worth knowing, those few men to whose judgments we can submit our own without hesitation. No course of literature could be complete without some mention of these; and I must speak to you today of the best living English critics of English literature. There are good French critics of English literature also; but we need not for the present consider them. A remarkable fact is the small number of really great English critics of English literature as compared with the number of great French critics of French literature. You can count the latter by dozens, the French having obtained supreme excellence and supreme ease in this branch of literature. But if I were asked to name the great English literary critics of today, I could name only three. It is of these three that I wish to speak.

These three are George Saintsbury, Professor of English literature in the University of Edinborough; Edmund Gosse, Professor of English literature in Cambridge University; and Edward Dowden, Professor of English literature in Dublin University. These are pre-eminent. With some hesitation might be added to these names, but only in a second or third class capacity, the name of Stopford Brooke,

whom you may know as the author of a primer of English literature, and of a history of Anglo-Saxon literature. But we have to concern ourselves now only with the work of the other three.

The first fact to observe about the work of these three is the degree to which it has been influenced, directed and coloured, by the study of French. Each one of the professors named is an equally good authority upon French as upon English literature; and two of them have written histories of French literature. The best work upon French literature in the English language is Saintsbury's "Short History of French Literature." It is not so very short as the name might imply. It is accompanied by a companion volume entitled "Specimens of French Literature"; and the two should be studied together. Professor Dowden, on the other hand, has given us one excellent volume on modern French literature. As for Mr. Gosse, a great number of his best critical essays deal with French subjects, and show the results of French study upon every page. I believe that all of these men are furthermore students of other foreign literatures. Mr. Gosse is a Scandinavian scholar. Mr. Saintsbury knows Anglo-Saxon and Provençal. Mr. Gosse, an excellent classical as well as modern scholar, has also busied himself with original poetry, and the study of verse in many languages. Again I suppose you know that Professor Dowden is famous as the biographer of Shelley—he provoked Matthew Arnold, by his life of the poet, into a very celebrated essay. The only one of the three who has attempted no creative work outside of criticism is Saintsbury. Perhaps for that very reason, he is the strongest, concentrating all his power in one direction. When we come to think of the acquirements of these men, it is impossible not to wonder at their powers of study. To master even one literature is the work of an ordinary life-time. But to master two, or even three literatures, in addition to the literatures of Greece and Rome, five in all, is certainly

a prodigious feat. It is something which reminds us of Gibbon's tremendous powers of reading and digesting what he read. But Gibbon was a rich man, with nothing to do except to please himself. England's three greatest modern critics are comparatively poor men, obliged to teach in order to live.

Of the three the greatest charm of style is shown by Mr. Gosse. In the course of this lecture I may quote some passages to you, in order to show you how very exquisitely he can write. This exquisiteness has been learned chiefly by the most careful study of French models. There are times also when Mr. Dowden approaches him. Mr. Saintsbury, altogether the shrewdest critic, is not the best stylist. Sometimes he is almost careless, though he can perform miracles. I imagine that he has always thought it more important to utter the thought than to care about the form of the utterance. But then, consider the enormous quantity of his work on two literatures—his history of French literature, his history of Elizabethan literature, his history of nineteenth century literature, and his volumes of essays, and the number of texts edited by him. He has done the work of five or six men; and if he had given more attention to style, we should have been deprived of some of the benefit of his knowledge.

Concerning the opinions of any one of these three critics, I should say to you, "Submit to their judgments." If any one of them should happen to be unjust in a single case, he would certainly be right in ninety-nine cases. No man is infallible in literary judgment. The nearest approach to the infallible in literary judgment is represented in the colossal work of the teacher of all these three, the greatest critic that ever lived—not an Englishman, but a Frenchman, the wonderful Sainte-Beuve. I have said that he was not an Englishman; but I must not forget to add that his mother was of English descent. He was born in 1804 and died in 1869, so that he is a very modern person. It was

he who really created the highest art of criticism, and whose influence entirely changed critical methods during the latter part of the present century. He was the critic of the great French romantic movement which began between 1820 and 1830. If we have today in England such good critics as Saintsbury and Dowden and Gosse, it is because Sainte-Beuve taught them how to be critics. I do not mean to tell you that they imitated him; indeed, no one of them would agree that Sainte-Beuve's method should be followed in all things. But it was by studying his method that they made the new English critical method.

We must say a few words now about criticism in general —what it means. Put into the simplest language possible, criticism is the art of discovering and of stating what is good and what is not good in a book. The old fashioned criticism, the criticism of the eighteenth century and of the centuries before it, signified very little in the modern meaning of the word. When it was the rule that a subject should be chosen in a certain way, and ordered in a certain way, and written about in a certain way; when there were fixed laws not only for the general construction of a sentence, but for the construction of every part of the sentence, and for the position of each and every word in the sentence— then criticism meant very little more than censorship and measurement. A thing was good if the subject was conventional, if the language was conventional, if the forms were conventional. On the other hand a book was not praiseworthy if the subject or the language or the thought was not according to the old fixed rules. Early in the nineteenth century higher forms of criticism made their appearance. Macaulay, as I told you long ago, was the founder of a new school of criticism, which consisted in analysing the value of the book in relation to moral and aesthetic ideas, and in relation also to the whole range of the subject treated. Macaulay would take a book upon Italian history, for example, and then compare what it con-

tained with his own idea of the whole subject of Italian history; then he would consider the author's ideas in relation to accepted moral ideas, and the author's sense of beauty in relation to accepted standards of beauty. This was a much larger and better way of criticism than had been followed before, but it was still far from perfect. Macaulay belonged by taste and feeling to the classical school of the eighteenth century; his standards of morality and ethics and philosophical truth were all old-fashioned, somewhat narrow, and above all English. Now a great criticism ought not to be any more English or French or German, than it should be Greek or Hebrew or Sanskrit. A great criticism should be equally true in all times and countries and conditions. For the highest criticism should not concern itself with any questions except those of beauty and of truth—nay, I should add, eternal beauty and eternal truth.

Here is the great difficulty about criticism. Let us consider for a moment how very few persons are capable of judging beauty and truth apart from everything else. A man who has been brought up to think in a narrow way may not be able to see beauty or truth at all. A pious Roman Catholic may not find beauty in a thing not written according to the mediaeval spirit of the religion to which he belongs. Whatever thought is contrary to the teaching of Christianity of the middle ages, may fill him with horror. Again, in the narrower Protestant creeds the education given is usually anti-aesthetic and anti-scientific; the narrowness of mind produced is very hard, and absolutely hostile to independence of expression or originality in feeling. The religious bias, as Spencer calls it, is almost necessarily opposed to fair criticism. Then there is the national feeling, the strong prejudice of country and of race. The average Englishman cannot consider the inhabitant of another country as good as an Englishman; and it is very difficult for him to acknowledge the superiority of anything foreign.

Well, it is the same in most countries. These very prejudices have their usefulness; they keep up the healthy spirit of race-pride—but they are utterly opposed to fair criticism. Furthermore, we have the social prejudices—those prejudices which prevent a man who belongs to the upper class of society, from justly considering what concerns the lower classes of society. There is also the prejudice of custom, and this prejudice extends into the highest strata of the intellectual world. The old generation refuses to accept the ideas of the new; the new despises the old. At the present time there are a great many men living who were educated before the time of the new philosophy, who know nothing about it, who detest it, and who cannot consequently understand the best literature of our time. For a man with the ideas of the eighteenth century cannot possibly understand a poem or an essay nor even a thoughtful story written by one who thinks according to the evolutional philosophy. Such men—many of them are great scholars—think they can understand because they read the words, but of the thought behind the words they do not perceive anything. This is only one of many examples. To be able to judge the beautiful and the true, our minds must be free from all such influences as I have been describing—from religious prejudices, from the prejudice of ignorance, from national prejudice, from race prejudice, from social prejudice, from class prejudice, from philosophical prejudice. How many men can free themselves from all of these? Certainly very few; and that is why there must always be very few great critics—especially in England, where all conventions have a more vigorous life than they have in almost any other country.

Now to return to the subject of Sainte-Beuve. Sainte-Beuve made himself a great critic not only by getting rid of all the prejudices which I mentioned, but by studying them and understanding them. He approached the vast subject of literature only after having prepared himself in

a most extraordinary way. He studied medicine, because medicine is in itself one of the greatest sciences for the development of the mind that can be studied without any very exceptional faculties. To understand men's minds, men's feelings, one must indeed first know something about their bodies; and in choosing this study Sainte-Beuve somewhat anticipated the evolutional school of psychology, which is based upon a knowledge of the nervous system. But he did not intend to become a doctor, and he dropped this study when he had learned enough of it to satisfy his own mind. Thereafter he studied religion, in order to understand belief; then he studied all forms of free thought, in order to understand scepticism. Subject after subject he thus took up and investigated, according as it served his purpose. Becoming one of the most learned of men in general knowledge of this sort, and also perhaps the most widely read man of his time, he entered upon his career of critic—without any bias, any prejudice, any narrowness, but with a great love of beauty in every form, and a wonderful genius for finding and for describing it.

Of course it is not enough to have read everything and to know everything in order to be a critic. One must have been born with intuitive and perceptive faculties of an extraordinary kind. One must have a certain kind of genius. It is very much like the difficulty of understanding the characters of men. Every one among you has remarked that some persons of your acquaintance understand men much better than others can do; they are born with that power; and all the experience possible would never make certain other persons whom you know able to exercise the same judgment. Now consider what a great book is. I think that there is no better definition of a great book than the definition made by Victor Hugo—the book is the man. And some of you who heard my lecture last year upon style will remember that I then said style is nothing more than the peculiar character of the writer. Sainte-Beuve saw

this truth when he entered upon his career of critic. He perceived that to understand a book, the reason of what is good in it, the reason of what is bad in it, the reason of the influence which it exerts, we must understand the man who wrote it. There is nothing more difficult than to understand common characters; much more is it difficult to understand uncommon characters. A man is the product of millions of years, and the depth of him is the depth of the whole night of eternity. Nothing is deeper than a mind, nothing is more difficult to learn. As I said before, one must be born with the power to study minds and feelings; and Sainte-Beuve had this faculty.

He attempted the study of literature in a way that no other man had ever thought of at that time. He would start out by studying the character of an author, all the details of his life, his personality, his habits, his experiences. Next he would consider that man in relation to the society and the time to which he belonged; he would try to discover to what extent the character of the man accorded with the character of that time, with the sentiments and beliefs and ideas of that society. Then he would consider the sources of the writer's inspiration, not only the books that he had read, but the origin of the ideas in those books, tracing back the thought of a nineteenth century writer either to the middle ages or to Greek civilization, or to intellectual influences imported from Oriental and other countries. Only when he had done all this did he think himself prepared to write his criticism. Of course, you must not suppose that Sainte-Beuve undertook in the case of every writer he criticized to read over again all the books which that author had studied, and all the books relating to the time in which he lived, and all the books treating of the subject which he had treated. Not at all. These things he already knew. He had read them; and having a memory as prodigious as that of a Hallam or a Macaulay, he remembered what he had read.

A word about the mass of his work. Much of it first appeared in newspapers. The criticism which appears in English newspapers is not, as a rule, of much literary value; that which appears in American newspapers is of no literary value. But much of what appears in French newspapers is of the very highest literary value. French journalism concerns itself much less about news than does other European journalism, and much more about literature. It allows its writers plenty of time to do their work. A great deal of such work is produced at the rate of two or three short articles in the course of a month. Sainte-Beuve contributed regularly about once a week, or four times a month, to certain Paris papers what he called his "Monday Talks" (*Causeries du Lundi*); and these Monday Talks became the greatest literary events of the week in Paris. Besides these, however, he produced a number of independent literary studies which he called "Criticisms and Literary Portraits" (*Critiques et Portraits Littéraires*); also a series of "Contemporary Portraits" (*Portraits Contemporains*). Published in book form, these alone represent fifty or sixty large volumes. But a more important production still was his literary and philosophical *Histoire de Port-Royal* in three volumes, which cost him alone twenty years of study. In this book his critical power was manifested in the very highest possible form. Perhaps some of you may never have heard of Port-Royal. The subject is not closely connected with this lecture; but I may say a few words about it. Port-Royal was a convent situated in France about eight miles from the King's palace of Versailles, during the seventeenth century, the time of Louis XIV. At Port-Royal there was a very peculiar society of monks and nuns, a new religious society composed of ladies and gentlemen, scholars and philosophers of the highest accomplishments; and the dream of these persons was to make a reformed Catholic religion in harmony with scientific knowledge. In order to oppose the influence of the Jesuits, the Port-Royal people became

educators; they taught religion and science together; they taught nobly and liberally; and they considered truth before theology. The great Pascal was one of their friends, and fought for them, silencing the Jesuit controversialists. The religious system which the Port-Royal people adopted is still known as Jansenism, so called from Bishop Jansen of Ypres. Then began a bitter war between the Jesuits and Port-Royal. Having greater influence at Rome, the Jesuits first got the Pope to condemn the doctrines of Port-Royal; then they went to work politically and socially to crush and ruin the institution. After many years they were successful. Port-Royal was made bankrupt, was even given into their hands. Triumphantly entering into the deserted establishment, they destroyed every vestige of anything that might recall the memory of their enemies. There was, however, something they could not destroy, and which Sainte-Beuve preserved for us—the noble thoughts and the great truths uttered and taught by the vanished society.

Now to reconstruct that convent at Port-Royal, to repeople it with the forms of all who had lived and died there, to make us not only see the faces and hear the conversation, but even know the thoughts and feelings of the dead, was a wonderful bit of magic. This Sainte-Beuve accomplished, and more. For in reconstructing Port-Royal, it was necessary for him also to resurrect the atmosphere and the scenery of the time of Louis XIV, and it was also necessary for him to teach us everything about the conflicting ideas and emotions, religious and social, of that time. But in all his criticisms he has done magic of this kind. Criticism by Sainte-Beuve is biographical; it is historical; it is philosophical; it is artistic. Therefore to read him is an education. But do not think that any painful effort is needed to read him. Not even Macaulay has such a charm of style. Sainte-Beuve teaches by the use of pictures. He does not discourse only, he paints. He does more than paint; he puts the living man before you so that you hear his voice,

feel the touch of his hands, apprehend the soul-sympathy existing between yourself and him. When you read Sainte-Beuve, the dead come back and talk to you; and as in dreams, you forget that they are dead, and imagine all that is said and done to be as real as it is natural.

This method has been called by a great many names. Most of these names are inadequate. It has been termed naturalistic; but this is no more correct than it would be to call the method romantic. There is only one name that it might be called by—that is, the method of Saint-Beuve. It is a combination of every possible way of studying and treating any subject critically, and if it is distinguishable by anything very peculiar, that peculiarity is the author's genius, his infinite sympathy, his irreproachable tolerance, his profound humanity. I imagine that this humanity is especially shown by his habit of studying an author less through the admiration of his friends than through the hatred of his enemies. He always took this view of things, that a man of original genius can not be in perfect harmony with his century; that he cannot therefore be in perfect accord with the society in which he moves; and that he must therefore be disliked, and very probably persecuted or calumniated. From the contempt, the abuse, or even the falsehoods that have been uttered or manifested towards a great man, we can often learn more about him than we can learn from the praise of those who loved him. Of course this requires extreme superiority of knowledge in matters of psychology. But the good critic must be a good psychologist.

The greatest of Sainte-Beuve's pupils was the historian Taine; and the best example of the influence of Sainte-Beuve upon Taine is, perhaps, the volume written about the character and life of Napoleon. But Taine was not so learned nor so clever nor so sympathetic as Sainte-Beuve. He was apt to use the method somewhat one-sidedly—thus showing, not its defects, but its difficulties. To criticize like Sainte-Beuve one must be as generous and as wise; and no

living critic is that. But the method of Sainte-Beuve will perhaps be still more perfected in the future by other great minds, for the best of all reasons—namely, that it is in perfect accord with the philosophy of evolution. No other method of criticism is exactly that. There was no evolutional philosophy when Sainte-Beuve was young, but he might be said to have in a certain way anticipated it. The innumerable critics who today follow the evolutional method, I mean those who trace the history of anything in literature back through all its centuries to its very beginning, and describe how the thing grew and budded and blossomed—these, for the most part, are not students of Herbert Spencer; they are imitators of Sainte-Beuve.

It has been well pointed out by Professor Saintsbury that in some respects the influence of Sainte-Beuve has been a little mischievous. Many people thought that they could imitate him by writing foolishly exact biographies of authors, and trying to connect the details of such biographies with passages in the books of the writers discussed. We have now every year hundreds of stupid books published, full of useless and impertinent gossip about the private lives of authors. Now Sainte-Beuve really never did anything of the kind. He never mentioned facts about an author's private life except when these facts happened to have particular value for critical use. He never made mistakes. He never made misjudgments. What he said remains as true today as when he said it, and will remain equally true for hundreds of years to come. It is possible, however, only for really great men to follow his system successfully. The three English critics mentioned at the beginning of this lecture have all followed it to some extent. One of them, Professor Dowden, not only acknowledges his immense debt to Sainte-Beuve, but assures us that all the important criticism during the latter part of the nineteenth century owes an equal debt to Sainte-Beuve. This means nothing less than that all the existing schools of English, French,

Italian, German, and I may add Russian criticism, have been made or modified by Sainte-Beuve's teaching. We are now immeasurably beyond the critical method of Macaulay, great as Macaulay's method became in his own hands.

Let us return to the special subject of the three great living English critics, and their relation to Sainte-Beuve. Of the three, Saintsbury is much the least attractive, both as to style and method. He is extraordinarily compressed, compact, condensed, never saying more than is absolutely necessary to express his meaning clearly. He is not attractive in any sense of the word, not a writer whom you can love, but he is a writer who commands your respect. And he commands it in strange ways, particularly by oppositions, by contradictions, by astonishing judgments totally at variance with the judgments of other great critics. Furthermore, he is provokingly cautious. Never does he allow himself to become enthusiastic even about the greatest dead writers; as for living writers, he makes it a rule never to speak about them when he can help it. Unlike Mr. Gosse and Mr. Dowden, he has none of that literary generosity which makes new reputations. Rather he is a destroyer of old ones. No critic with whom I am acquainted is more provoking at times, by his coldness, by his quaint manner of sneering, by the frigid contempt with which he passes over great names in silence. In all these peculiarities, you will find that he is the most typically English of the three. I should say that he has all the repellent qualities of the Englishman quite as strongly marked as the good qualities of the Englishman. But I must say that I should trust him most of all. I do not believe that he will ever mislead you. And he is singularly free from prejudices. Sometimes his sneer, or some single sentence expressing contempt, would lead you to believe that his judgments are coloured by religious or by moral prejudices. But it would be easy to cite judgments which proved the contrary. Observe for example, his emi-

nently just, though reserved, praise of Huxley, of Hobbes, of Mandeville, of others who were strongly opposed to ecclesiastical influence. Or take, on the other hand, his severe criticism of Wycliffe. Again you might suspect him of prudishness, the great English hypocrisy of prudishness, because he strongly condemns certain immoralities in certain English writers. But read his splendid reviews of the work done by writers like Carew in English, work as unchaste as anything can be; or read his very fine appreciation of Baudelaire, a name held in horror by prudes both in France and in England; or read his estimates of French writers like Gautier, Hugo, Maupassant, not to mention older French men-of-letters who went quite as far in offending against what we call moral standards. He has certainly impartiality enough in everything relating to religion and ethics.

As I have said, he provokes. He tells us, for example, that Byron's poetry is not true poetry, that it is pinchbeck, sham; he tells us that it is about as much like true poetry, as the painted scenery in a theatre is like a real landscape. This is one instance of what you may expect from him. He will tell you that there is not even one page of Ruskin which does not contain some untrue or questionable statement. Ruskin is almost the only living writer, except Swinburne, to whom he has given much attention. He will tell you that De Quincey is tiresome, gossiping, and at times absolutely foolish. But if you have patience to examine the reasons which he gives for these statements you will find that they are very truthful. Examine Byron carefully, and you will find that there is scarcely a perfect verse in the whole of his work. Balance Ruskin's judgment carefully, without suffering yourself to be blinded by the dazzling splendour of his language, and you will discover that his value is not that of direct truth, but only of suggestiveness. Take those pages of De Quincey severely criticized, and forget for a moment the pages that can not be criticized; then you will learn how very tiresome and worthless some of De Quincey's

work really is. On the other hand you will obtain from Saintsbury a deeper knowledge of the merits of the same three writers than any other English critic has given us. And an astonishing fact is that Saintsbury's judgments in French literature are quite as sound and concise as his judgments upon English literature. He is the best guide that I know of in both literatures, better even than Professor Dowden. And I do not know that he has exhibited any idiosyncrasies to quarrel with in the whole of his production, except perhaps his obstinate position on the subject of the line between poetry and prose. Although he has praised, and praised highly, certain splendid forms of poetical prose, both in French and in English literature, he fights for the theory that poetical prose ought not to be written. In this respect I am glad to say that Dowden and Gosse do not agree with him, and that the best French critics do not agree with him.

I should like you to approach Saintsbury always with this conviction in your mind, that he is never so simple as he appears. You must not try to read him quickly. Everything he says deserves to be thought about, and there is a great deal more in his sentences than you can imagine when you read them for the first time. Saintsbury's books are books which you should keep in your libraries, to be read not once only but many times; for only by reading them over and over again can you discover the great power that is in them. Of course in the case of his literary histories, it is of no use for you to read them without having read the literature described. But whenever you have learned to like a French or an English writer, turn to those books for Saintsbury's estimate, and read that estimate many times. Then you will learn how great a teacher he is.

Although influenced by Sainte-Beuve, Saintsbury has never attempted to carry out Sainte-Beuve's method in the direction of biography. He does not try to explain a man to you by the circumstances of that man's parentage, life or

social surroundings. In short, he never theorizes when he can help it, because he is afraid of drawing false inferences. But he gives you biographical facts, and he leaves you to make your own conclusions from them. Perhaps this is the safest way, and it has one great merit—it helps to make the student think for himself. This is about all which is necessary to say in regard to Professor Saintsbury. No biography of him has yet been published.

It is quite different in the case of the other two great critics. We have plenty of biographical material concerning them, for the simple reason that they went outside of the rôle of critics and scholars, to appear as poets and dramatists, which made the public want to know everything about them. Mr. Saintsbury does not write poetry, nor do anything outside of the severe limits of his critical profession. But the productions of Professors Dowden and Gosse have been of an extremely varied kind.

Perhaps Professor Gosse is the more remarkable of the two; and I imagine that he is certainly the greatest writer of the three, in point of style. He is also very much the best known to the public at large. His career has been rather curious. He is the son of the naturalist, Philip Gosse, and was born in 1849. He began life as a clerk in the library of the British Museum. Then he became translator to the Board of Trade. Later still his extraordinary talents attracted attention, with the result that he was elected lecturer on English literature at Trinity College, Cambridge. Besides those histories of literature of which I have already spoken, he has produced five volumes of poems, five volumes of essays, and two volumes of literary biography—prodigious work for a man still comparatively young. As to the five volumes of poems, I am sorry to say that I think they are of no importance at all. As verse there is no fault to be found with them; they are perfectly correct, very musical, very clever. But there is really nothing new in them and nothing very strong. It is quite

different in regard to the five volumes of essays. There is much more poetry in the prose of those essays than in the verses of the other volumes. Indeed, I do not hesitate to say that they are the best essays written by any living Englishman, and I think that there is no essay-work by any other writer of the nineteenth century which surpasses them. Perhaps they have never been equalled in English. To be still more definite about their merit, I shall say that these essays are the nearest approach ever made in English to the elegance and grace and astonishing colour of the best French essays. In other words Mr. Gosse writes English almost as beautifully as the best of French writers write French. But remember, this is due to the fact that Mr. Gosse has studied French with a special view to perfecting his own style. Moreover, he has adopted the method of Sainte-Beuve in the fullest manner possible, and in most cases with surprising success. He studies the man, the writer, from every point of view, in relation to the time, in relation to heredity, in relation to his social circumstances. And he has extended a great deal of generous notice to living writers, made a great many reputations, and endeared himself to literary aspirants all over Europe. In America he is very much loved, and he gave there a series of lectures which have been very popular, notwithstanding the fact that he dared to say that America had never produced a great poet, and perhaps only one man who could be called even a good poet in a small way.

It is very difficult to give you any idea of the splendour of Mr. Gosse's English by extracts, because, in any of his essays, everything is so woven up with everything else that the effect of any part really belongs to the whole; and when you detach one sentence or paragraph, it loses much of the colour and beauty which it displayed when united to the rest of the living texture. But I shall try the effect of a quotation or two. Here is a little description of the character of the poet Lord de Tabley, which as a description

seems to me to teach us something new about the power of the English language when managed by a master-hand: "His mind was like a jewel with innumerable facets, all slightly blurred or misted;—or perhaps it would be a juster illustration to compare his character to an opal, where all the colours lie *perdue*, drowned in a milky mystery, and so arranged that to a couple of observers, simultaneously bending over it, the prevalent hue shall in one case seem a pale green, in the other a fiery crimson!"

I cannot conceive of anything finer in English than that. Of course the idea of the comparison itself has a natural splendour; anybody who has seen an opal, and who knows how to write, must say something striking about it. But even when Mr. Gosse talks, not about jewels, but about the most common and vulgar things, his style is equally splendid and equally surprising. I give you, in illustration, two little paragraphs taken from the narrative of a visit which he made to Whitman some eight or nine years ago: "Whitman, in his suit of hodden grey, and shirt thrown wide open at the throat, his grey hair and white beard voluminously flowing, seemed positively blanched with cleanliness; the whole man sand-white with spotlessness, like a deal-table that has grown old under the scrubbing-brush. . . . If it be true that all remarkable human beings resemble animals, then Walt Whitman was like a cat, a great old grey Angora Tom, serenely blinking under his combed waves of hair, with eyes inscrutably dreaming."

Perhaps some of you may not have seen an Angora cat. It has extraordinarily long silky hair, looking like a pair of whiskers and a beard. This is a pen-picture that makes you see the old man quite as plainly as the writer saw him.

The volume from which these extracts are taken, is a volume of which the title, Mr. Gosse tells us, may be spelled in two ways—"Critical Kit-Cats," or "Kit-Kats"; and it is in this volume that his methods and his style most resemble those of Sainte-Beuve. But another volume of nearly equal

excellence is his "Questions at Issue"; and I should be inclined to accord only a slightly inferior place to his "Seventeenth Century Essays." In all these you will perceive that he has an astonishing power of making things seem alive. "Gossip in a Library" belongs rather to the severer form of the literary essay, and deals chiefly with the subject of curious and rare books; but you might obtain much pleasure from perusing it, even if the actual profit should prove small. A very splendid volume, both in relation to style and instruction, is the "Northern Studies," in which Mr. Gosse has condensed the best results of his Scandinavian scholarship. The book is unfortunately out of print for the moment; but I believe that a new edition is being prepared.

I have not anything good to say to you about the poetry of this great critic; but I must tell you that he did not write it with the idea of displaying himself as a great poet; it was written chiefly to exercise himself in the mastery of certain forms. And he has mastered them very successfully indeed, although one would wish rather that he had given the time to another volume of essays on literature. In my opinion he has carried the form of the essay to the highest point of perfection reached in the English language.

Professor Dowden is an equally remarkable figure, though differing widely from the other two. He was born in 1843. He must have had most extraordinary ability as a student, for at the age of only 24 he was appointed Professor of English literature in Trinity College, Dublin. He is still in that position; but he is also a lecturer, occasionally, at Cambridge university, at Oxford university, and at Edinburgh University, and he holds high degrees from those three universities as well as from his own. He was first made widely known by his "Life of Shelley,"—the same Life criticized by Matthew Arnold. Later on he became widely known as a student of Shakespeare. He has also produced a volume of poems of tolerable excellence, and two volumes of literary essays of very great excellence. His short history

of French literature is one of the best ever made, though differing entirely in character from Professor Saintsbury's work on the same subject; and his work upon modern English literature is perhaps the most interesting of any to read, although it is very much condensed, and does not embrace nearly so many subjects as the work of Saintsbury.

Professor Dowden, in his later work at least, shows very strongly the influence of French models. He also is a disciple of Sainte-Beuve, though less successful than Mr. Gosse in imitating some of Sainte-Beuve's methods. But the study of the French masters has given to his style a great deal of the same colour and power observable in the work of Mr. Gosse. I do not think that he is so clever as Mr. Gosse in saying a great deal with a very few words. He does not appear to have Mr. Gosse's power of concentration; his sentences are much longer; and he writes much more diffusely. But, this being said, it were often difficult to choose between them. Mr. Dowden has the poetical temperament to the same degree that Mr. Gosse has; and in point of style he is able to give us surprises of a like kind. Open his last volume of literary essays, and almost in the very beginning you will find a simile like this: "Whither is literature tending?—The science of spiritual meteorology has not yet found its Dalton or its Humboldt; the law of the tides of the soul has not yet been expressed in a formula."

The man who writes this way we feel to be at heart both a poet and a thinker; and we are prepared to be delighted by him even when he touches upon metaphysical law or philosophical subjects. And the delight comes very soon. A little further on, he speaks of the power of the influence of a foreign literature to inspire our own, like the fusion of strange blood that gives new force to a weak or perishing race: "The shock of strangeness is inspiriting. Every great literary movement of modern Europe has been born from the wedlock of two peoples. So the great Elizabethan literature sprang from the love-making of England with Italy;

the poetry of the early part of the nineteenth century from the ardour aroused in England by the opening promise of the French Revolution."

This is the way to write the philosophy of literature, so that we can be at once interested and taught, at once amused and instructed. There is a great deal in that little sentence; for it expresses a universal law, ruling the history not only of literature but of life, the law that governs not only the union of individuals, but the union also of intellectual elements. It reminds us also of the teaching of Sir Francis Galton, that men of genius chiefly come from families representing the union of different national elements. And it ought to interest us here, this law; for if there be universal truth in it, a new Japanese literature must eventually arise from the influence of Western literature, just as we see that, even now in Europe, the influence of Oriental literature, especially from India, is beginning to show itself, to exercise a new power in Western thought.

Mr. Dowden's essays are rich in sentences like these; and, as you might have divined from the above quotations, he has been a sincere student of modern science. I think we may call him a strong evolutionist. He is the only one of the three great critics who has boldly declared that the influence of men like Herbert Spencer will be of the greatest possible value to the literature of the coming age. It has been rather the fashion, both for French and English critics, to declare that science is killing poetry. Mr. Dowden thinks the exact opposite. He believes that science is even now putting new blood and strength into literature, and is preparing the way for grander forms both of prose and of poetry than were ever known before.

In this and in other ways I think Professor Dowden is more of a reformer, more broadminded, and more generous than either Mr. Gosse or Mr. Saintsbury. Mr. Saintsbury would certainly not hazard any strong opinion upon the possible influence in literature of the evolutional philosophy.

Indeed, when he has spoken of it, he has always done so in the most cautious manner, and in the tone of one who thinks that nothing has yet been decided. In this respect he well represents English conservatism. Professor Gosse shows, through all his writings, that he is as much under the influence of the new philosophy as he is under the influence of Sainte-Beuve. But Professor Dowden, greatest by his many university honours, is the only one who has had such sympathy with the new thought, and such courage to express that sympathy, as to give us a thoughtful and splendid chapter upon the subject. He might also do much more for the new cause in literature, were it not that his time is very largely taken up with editing as well as with lecturing. But we should be grateful for what we get, in the case of men like these.

At the beginning of this essay I spoke of Mr. Stopford Brooke, whom you all know of through his excellent primer of English literature. You know that a good primer is very much harder to write than a big history; even Huxley declared that it was the hardest thing for any intellectual man to undertake. The great point in a primer is, not so much to be simple and clear, but to choose. There must be not only immense compression, but amassing of only the most important facts bearing upon the subject, as that subject ought to be presented to young minds. And that little primer of literature was the best of its kind ever written; in the new edition it has increased value as an educational treasure. The man capable of writing it was not an ordinary scholar by any means, but a very extraordinary one. Mr. Brooke was known as a clergyman considerably before he became known in literature; he was famous for the eloquence and beauty of his sermons. People thought it an intellectual treat to go to the church in which he preached, just for the pleasure of hearing him. In his leisure moments he gave his time chiefly to the subject of Anglo-Saxon literature, and became an authority upon it—so that you can see

he is a many-sided man. But I do not think that he can be called either a great critic or a great stylist; indeed, he has never taken the special pains necessary to become either. One quotation from his poetry will illustrate what I mean, a little song, showing both his excellences and his defects. It is taken from a dramatic composition entitled "Riquet of the Tuft."

Young Sir Guyon proudly said,
"Love shall never be my fate."
"None can say so but the dead!"
Shrieked the witch-wife at his gate.

"Go and dare my shadowed dell,
Love will quell your happy mood!"
Guyon, laughing his farewell,
Rode into the fairy wood.

There he met a maiden wild;
By a tree she stood alone,
When she looked at him and smiled,
At a breath his heart was gone.

In her arms she twined him fast,
And, like wax within the flame,
Melted memory of the past,
Soul and body, name and fame!

This simple little ballad is quite a perfect thing thus far —everything that a weird song should be. But the last stanza spoils the whole composition:

Late at night the steed came back;
"Where's our good knight?" cried his men.
Far and wide they sought his track,
But Guyon no one saw again.

Commonplace phrasing, doggerel-verse, utter indifference to finish! A beautiful little composition destroyed by haste and indifference. Now there is something of the same haste

observable in all the work of Mr. Brooke, except in perhaps that wonderful little primer, at which he really worked very carefully, and had the assistance or advice of Matthew Arnold and other eminent men. Everywhere you find a display of immense natural talent and great scholarship, but no sustained exquisiteness, no caution, and a great tendency to twist facts so as to adjust them to fit favourite theories. No few of these theories, about Anglo-Saxon literature, for example, have been proved to be utterly wrong; and they are wrong for exactly the same reason that the little song which I quoted to you was never properly finished. Again we find incapacity to mass and arrange facts systematically. In the first form of the great work upon Early English Literature, the student is utterly confused by the arbitrary arrangement of the whole thing, by tiresome and useless digression, by leaving one subject half finished in order to consider another, and then returning to the same subject again in a different chapter. In the subsequent and much condensed form of the work, a condensation exacted by the good judgment of the publishers, there is a great improvement; but the new chapters upon Celtic literature and the ancient peoples of Britain, together with the chapters upon King Alfred, show the same faults as those which mark and mar the whole of the larger work. Therefore it would be impossible to consider Mr. Brooke as a trustworthy critic, or indeed as a critic at all. He is a poet, a scholar, a discoverer, a man who has done very much to stimulate the study of Anglo-Saxon literature; but he is not a critic.

There are of course quite a number of English scholars who are occasional critics and good ones—specialists like Professor Kerr, for example. But these men are first of all philologists, and not professional critics, so that they are outside of our present consideration. We have only three great professional critics, recognized as such, to offset the fifteen or twenty master critics that France can boast of. And what I wanted you to observe from the beginning of this lecture

has been the influence of French literature upon these three. They have been made by the study of French criticism; they have developed an entirely new art through the study of French criticism; and they have done more than any other men to turn the attention of Englishmen to the real superiority of French literature in certain departments. Another thing which they have done, and a very important thing it is, has been to create a new spirit of literary tolerance and generosity. Forty or fifty years ago English men-of-letters insisted, like Macaulay, on judging everything foreign from an English standpoint—from the standpoint of English ethics, English feelings, English habits and customs; and the result was narrowness and dryness of soul. Today it is very different. Mr. Saintsbury, conservative in many things; Mr. Gosse, liberal in most things; and Mr. Dowden, liberal in all things —have united their forces to teach us how to look for beauty in itself, apart from all considerations of ethics and habits and prejudices. It was from the French that they learned this, the excellent teaching lately embodied so well in these little sentences of Anatole France, "*Il ne faut pas demander la verité à la littérature; il faut demander la verité aux sciences.*" That is to say, we must not ask truth from literature, in the sense of exactness of fact; such exactness it is the duty of science to give. The only real object of literature is beauty. But remember that beauty in itself also means truth of a larger kind than truth of fact; it means truth of feeling. And in all my lectures I have never failed, when I had the opportunity, to remind you that literature is not the art of writing books, but the art of expressing feeling—feeling, which means everything noble as well as everything common in human life. Today these truths seem plain enough, but very few Englishmen could see them fifty years ago. It was the duty of the great critics to make them see it.

The great difference between French and other criticism

until the present time has been not more in method than in charm. A good French review—a review, for example, by Jules Lemaître—delights like a good story, while it instructs in the best possible way. Not infrequently it happens that the review of a book is much more interesting than the book itself. On the other hand, German criticism, being especially scientific, is likely to be somewhat dry, and never can appeal to an equally large class of minds. English critics have perceived this educational value in the French method, and it is noteworthy that such a critic as Mr. Gosse, who has obtained distinction both as a German and a Scandinavian scholar, never allowed himself to be influenced by German methods of critical analysis. Now the literature of English criticism during the latter part of the present century, has been made almost entirely by French influence. In what other directions is the same influence to be seen?

In the beginning I said that I was going to speak of the general relation between French and contemporary English literature. We owe to French influence also something in poetry, and something in fiction, but not so much as might be supposed. In poetry the French of today had little to teach Englishmen, for English poetry is much more developed than English prose. There are, however, marks of the great French romantic poets in the work of our own Victorian poets—in Swinburne a great deal, in Rossetti a little, in Tennyson scarcely anything. This is curious, that the poet of all who most influenced modern English is the one Englishman who had least to learn from the French. The forms of which English poetry is capable have almost been exhausted. Therefore the influence of French forms could not be much. What could be borrowed from French poetry would be feeling; and the poets who have borrowed from the French have been those who allowed certain influences to appear in their poetry not in accordance with real English feeling. Baudelaire and Gautier, who particularly helped Swinburne to colour his verse, were poets of sensation—sen-

sation of a kind which English feeling usually rejects. We may say that the influence of French poetry upon English poetry has been very small during the Victorian poetry, and has been chiefly in the direction of increased colour and sensuous charm.

As for the novel, the French do not appear to have taught us anything. No great English novelist of the period has successfully attempted to write upon French models. Of course, the naturalistic school, the school of Zola and the others, had its message for English novel writers, and experiments were made, but none of them has been very successful. If we can speak of any French influence in this direction, it can only be the influence of theory—the theory of Realism. Moreover, it is remarkable that at the present time literary novels have almost ceased to be written by Englishmen. Take any French novel, noteworthy or not, and you will find that it is beautifully written; the style is always admirable. But although fifteen hundred new books are promised for the month of December—that is, next month—by English publishers, I doubt whether among them all will be one beautifully written novel. The novel is multiplying; but it is also deteriorating. It would indeed be a very good thing if English writers of novels could be induced to imitate the workmanship of the French. The trouble is—money. Novel-writing in English has become a money-making business, and the public do not care about style. The last great writer of novels who had a style was Stevenson.

In another direction, however, French fiction is influencing English fiction—the direction of the Short Story. You may think it strange, but it is nevertheless true that until within very recent times the English reading public did not care for English short stories, and English publishers would not publish them. Yet the very same public would buy thousands of volumes of short stories in French, and read them with delight. Perhaps it was thought that only

Frenchmen could write really great stories of this kind. The thought was altogether wrong. Perhaps no English writer living can write a short story quite as well as a Frenchman, except Rudyard Kipling. But there is now a growing demand for short stories, and many clever writers are trying to imitate the French in this way, even in the matter of style. But it is curious to observe how the change was brought about. French literature directly influenced, not English literature in this matter, but American. America first yielded to this influence; the work of Poe, Hawthorne, and later Bret Harte, considerably influenced by French writers, at last yielded fruit. An immense number of books of little stories were produced in America after 1860 or 1870; the best of these became popular in England; and then came the short stories of Stevenson and Kipling. Before that some English writers, like Dickens and Lytton, wrote wonderful short stories, but the public only read them because they were already familiar with the novels of the same authors. I remember a most beautiful little story called "A Bird of Passage" by J. Sheridan Le Fanu, published in England early in the seventies; it was ignored in England, but the American public were delighted with it. Now we can fairly state that the English prejudice in favour of the novel, as against the short story, is breaking down, and that this again is due to French influence.

Thus we have evidence of French influence in criticism, a little in poetry, and a little in fiction. But in other departments of literature the English remain very much behind their neighbours. In the drama the French remain incomparably superior. Indeed, French plays are constantly being translated for English theatres; while no great English drama, of an actable kind, has appeared during the period. And there is yet another department of literature in which the French have much to teach the English—the Sketch, the essay of observation. In that we are still immeasurably behind.

CHAPTER VII

THE PROSE OF SMALL THINGS

THERE can be no doubt that in spite of what is called the "tyranny of fiction" the novel is slowly dying, and changing shape. There will be some new form of novel developed, no doubt, but it must be something totally different from the fiction which has been tyrannizing over literature for nearly a hundred years. Also poetry is changing; and the change is marked here, much more than it is in fiction, by a period of comparative silence.

Our business today is chiefly with prose; but some of the remarks which I shall have to make will also apply to poetry. A branch of literature dies only when the subject has been exhausted—at least this is the rule under natural conditions. What subjects have been exhausted in English literature to such a degree that further treatment of them has become impossible, or seemingly impossible? It is an interesting question, and will repay attention.

First of all we should remember that literature has its fashions, like everything else. Some fashions live but for a season, just like some particular fashion in dress. But there are other fashions or habits which last for very long periods,—just as the custom of wearing silk or wool, irrespective of the shape of the garments, may last for hundreds of years or even longer. We are apt, on account of the length of time during which certain literary customs last, to imagine them much more natural and indispensable than they really are. The changes now likely to take place in English literature are not changes in the form of the garment, so much as changes in the material of which the garment is to be made. But so long has this material been used that many of us have been accustomed to think of the sub-

stance as literature itself, and as indispensable to literary creation.

To illustrate better what I mean let me ask you to think for a moment about what has most strongly impressed you as making a great difference between Western literatures generally and your own. You will understand at once that I am not speaking of form. When you read English poetry or fiction, French poetry or fiction, German poetry or fiction, and I might say drama as well, the impression you receive has a certain strangeness, a certain tone in it particularly foreign; and in every case or nearly every case this tone is about the same. Am I not right in suggesting that the sense of strangeness which you receive from foreign literature is particularly owing to the way in which the subject of sex-relations is treated in all literature of the West? Love has been the dominant subject throughout Western literature for hundreds of years, and that is why I think you feel that literature especially foreign to your own habits of thinking and feeling.

But the very fact that you do so find this difference, ought to have suggested to you that, after all, there must be something unnatural, artificial, in this passionate element of Western verse. Human character and human feeling are not essentially different on opposite sides of the world. The fundamental sentiments of society are everywhere pretty nearly the same, because they are based upon very nearly the same kinds of moral and social experience. If the descendant of one civilization finds something extremely different in the thinking and acting of the descendant of another civilization, he has a right to suppose that the difference is really a difference of custom. And customs must change just like fashions.

Fifty years ago—no, even twenty-five years ago—it would have been considered almost absurd to say that the subject of love in European literature was only a passing thing, a fashion, a custom assuredly destined to give place

to some other kind of material. Scholars and sociologists would have cried out in astonishment, and talked about the literatures of Greece and Rome, as testifying to the contrary. Even now there are many people who imagine that love must be eternally the theme of literature. But the greater thinkers, the men of today who can see, do not hesitate to declare that it is passing away. It was only a very, very old fashion.

Indeed, if you think about the history of English literature as it is now understood—and that is to say, about the history of European literature in general—you will find that the subject of love has not always been the dominant note, by any means. The earliest literature had very little to do with the subject at all; the old Anglo-Saxon poetry and prose, for example, dealt chiefly with heroic and sacred subjects. The Anglo-Norman literature touched the matter very sparingly indeed; and the great epic of the French conquerors, the Song of Roland, is remarkable for the fact that there are scarcely five lines in it with regard to the fair sex. But one incident of a tender character is mentioned—the death of the betrothed of Roland when she hears of the hero's fate. It was not until the time of the mediaeval romances that the subject of love began to blossom and grow in European literature—so that, after all, the fashion is only some hundreds of years old. When the erotic literature began in earnest with the great singing period of Elizabeth, the inspiration was chiefly taken from the Latin and the Greek poets; it was not of the modern races at all, but was a renaissance from the past. What we call the Renaissance feeling accounted very much for the erotic literature between the Elizabethan period and the Classical period—the eighteenth century "Augustine Age," when the subject was considerably chilled in treatment by a new sense of the importance of restraint. But this tendency to restraint soon yielded before the charm of the freshly invented novel, and from the days of Richardson to our own, the dominant sub-

ject in English literature again became love. You see that throughout the past it was not always the dominant note by any means. It was a fashion—and it is now passing away.

As a matter of fact the subject is entirely exhausted, all through Europe. Such branches of erotic literature as could not be exhausted in England, owing to the particular character of the race, have been entirely exhausted in France, in Italy, and elsewhere. The world has become tired of love-stories and tired of love-poetry. The story-tellers and the poets of the future will have to find other and higher subjects.

But what subjects? Almost every subject has been exhausted in fiction. No mortal man could now invent a new plot, or tell a story that has not been told before. It is true that every year hundreds of novels are published, but all of them are but repetitions of what has been told before. The only thing that the writer now can do is to make recombinations with old material; and even the possibility of such combinations has now become almost exhausted.

The men most competent to make a prediction do not seem to be inclined to predict what is going to happen. Professor Saintsbury frankly says he does not know, but he has faith in the genius of the English race and language to produce something new. Professor Dowden also says that he does not know, but he thinks there is going to be a new literature and that philosophy will have much to do with it. Professor Gosse is the only one who speaks out boldly. He thinks that the novel will become impossible except by the method of Zola, which consists in describing within a single volume some whole branch of industry, art or commerce. But the method of Zola could be adopted only by some man of extraordinary working strength, as well as genius, and even such subjects as Zola's method deals with must eventually become exhausted. There is the psychological novel; but the example of George Meredith has shown that it has

no chance of ever becoming popular. Fiction in the old sense is probably doomed, or will be restricted to the short story. As for poetry, that will leave the subject of love almost alone, and will chiefly interest itself with the higher emotional life. In other words, we are to have a new psychological poetry. These views of Mr. Gosse are very interesting, but I can not take the time to talk about his arguments in favour of them. I am only anxious that you should recognize the opinion of the great critics in regard to this probability—first, that love will not be the subject of the future prose or the future poetry, and secondly, that the higher emotional life will almost certainly take the place formerly given to the passional life.

It may seem like the waste of a great many words to tell all this about what is still supposititious. But if any of you hope to make literature your profession, it is above all things necessary that you should be prepared to follow the tendency of the age. Any man of letters who strives against the natural current of change will almost certainly be wrecked in consequence. Any book produced, no matter how well written, which can be classed with the productions of a dead school by its thought and feeling, will soon be forgotten. Moreover, in your private reading it is very, very essential to read in modern directions. Indeed, among many great educators of today it is a matter for regret that so much attention is given exclusively to the literature of past centuries, because that literature in sentiment and imagination is foreign to our own time, notwithstanding the beauty of its expression.

In future prose, two fields are certainly sure to find much cultivation—the field of the essay, and the field of the sketch. You are aware that during the nineteenth century the essay and the sketch have been much less cultivated in England than in France; and the reason is that writers of essays and sketches could not possibly compete with the writers of novels. The novel practically crushed the essay.

It was as if an immense mass of rocks had been thrown down upon a grassy field; in order that the grass and flowers could bloom again, it was necessary that the pressure should be removed. And it is likely to be removed very soon. The more speedily the novel decays, the more the essay and the sketch will come again into blossom and favour. Slight as such literature may seem to the superficial eye, it is really far more durable and much more valuable than fiction, in the majority of cases. A single fine essay may live for thousands of years—witness the little essays by Cicero, now translated into all languages, and studied everywhere for their beauty of expression and thought.

As for the sketch, I think it has a very great future; even now it is able to struggle a little against a novel. By the word sketch I mean any brief study in prose which is either an actual picture of life as seen with the eyes, or of life as felt with the mind. You know that the word strictly means a picture lightly and quickly drawn. A sketch may be a little story, providing it keeps within the world of fact and sincere feeling. It may take the form of a dialogue between two persons, providing that the conversation recorded makes for us a complete dramatic impression. It might be a prose-monologue, inspired by the experience of some country or town. It might be only a record of something seen, but so well seen that, when recorded, it is like a water-colour. In short, the sketch may take a hundred forms, a thousand forms, and it offers the widest possible range for the expression of every literary faculty. You may exercise your utmost power in reflection, in description, or in emotional expression, within the limits of the sketch. Of course the sketch ought to be short; but the charm of the form is that there is no rule about how short. You may make a sketch of only fifty lines, or you can make a sketch ten or twelve pages long. I do not think that a purely literary sketch ought to represent in print more than from ten to sixteen pages. But there is no rule.

There is something more to say about the importance to you of studying this branch of literature, of exercising yourself in the production of it. Remember that we are living in a very busy age, in which the opportunity for leisurely literary work can come to but few. No matter how rich a man may be, the new exigencies of social existence will not allow him to enjoy the patient dreamy life of the past. In a century full of hurry, where every man is expected to do more than three men would have been asked to do some fifty years ago, it is much more easy and profitable to attempt brief forms of literature than long ones. Neither will the writers of a future generation have any reason to fear the competition between short and lengthy works of literary art, for the great public, no less than the literary classes, will certainly become tired of lengthy productions; their preference will be given to works of small compass which can be read in intervals of leisure.

I have said so much about the sketch for two reasons. One is that, unlike the essay, its value does not necessarily depend upon scholarship or philosophical capacity. The other reason is that it happens to be one of those few forms of literature in which Japan can hold her own with Western countries. Judged by recent translations, the old Japanese sketch, as I should call it, might be very favourably compared with the same class of work in England and France, and not suffer much by comparison. And yet the Japanese language, the written language, was at that time far inferior to Western languages as a medium of expression. The fact is that the literature of the sketch depends for its merit a great deal upon what has nothing to do with ornate style; it depends upon good thinking and sincere feeling. Critics have said that neither Japanese drama nor Japanese fiction can compare with Western fiction and drama. Whether they are right or wrong I leave you to judge. But if any critic should say that the Japanese sketch cannot compare with the same kind of literature abroad, he would

prove himself incompetent. This kind of literature seems to be exactly suited to the genius of the language as well as to the genius of the national character; and in an age when the sketch is again likely to make for itself a great place in European literature, it would be well to give all possible attention to its cultivation in Japanese literature.

Of course I need not further insist upon the difference between the sketch—which always should be something of a picture—and the essay, which requires exact scholarship and is rather an argument or analysis than anything else. But since a sketch may at times be narrative, it is quite necessary that you should be able to distinguish between a sketch and an anecdote, which is also narrative. The anecdote proper is simply the record of an incident, without any emotional or artistic detail. This kind of composition lends itself to humour, especially, and therefore we find that a great proportion of what we call anecdotes in English literature are of the humorous kind. It does not require any psychological art or descriptive power to tell a short funny story. Such a story ordinarily is not a sketch. But in those rare cases where a humorous story is told from the psychological point of view, so as to make the reader share all the emotions of the experience, then the narrative of incident may rise to the dignity of the sketch. A good example is furnished by the late English poet, Frederick Locker, whose prose is scarcely less delicate than his verse, and very much the same in tone. He has told us about a little experience of his, which we must call a sketch because it is very much more than an anecdote. It is simply his own account of a blunder which he made in the house of an aristocratic friend, by upsetting a bottle of ink upon a magnificent carpet. You see the happening is nothing at all in itself; but the way in which it is told, the way in which the feelings of the writer are conveyed to the reader, is admirable. I can not quote it all, nor would you readily understand some of the allusions to English customs. But a few extracts will show you

what I mean. He first describes his reception at the house of his friends, by the maid servant; for the friends were not at home. He introduces us to the servant:

"This handsome maid was past her giddy youth, but had not nearly arrived at middle age. Some people might have called her comely, and some attractive; I found her anything but cordial—in fact, she had a slightly chilling manner, as if she was not immensely pleased to see me, and would not break her heart if she never saw me again. However, in I walked and was taken to the drawing room."

This is only light fun; but we understand from it exactly the somewhat hard character of the girl and the uncomfortable feelings of the visitor. The author goes on to describe the room in a few bright sentences, each of which is a suggestive drawing. The visitor decides then to pass his waiting time in writing some poetry; and he looks for an inkstand. At last he finds one—an immense glass inkstand—of which he draws a picture for us. As he tries to lift up the inkstand by the top, the upper part breaks away from the lower part, and over the magnificent carpet pours the ink. And now the visitor, author of this awful mischief, finds himself obliged to be very, very humble to that servant girl whom at first he spoke of so scornfully:

"Can you conceive my feelings? I spun around the room in an agony. I tore at the bell, then at the other bell, then at both the bells—then I dashed into the library and rang the bells there, and then back again to the drawing room. The maid who had admitted me came up almost immediately looking as calm as possible, and when she saw the mischief, she seemed all at once to rise to the gravity of the occasion. She did not say a word—she did not even look dismayed, but, in answer to my frenzied appeal, she smiled and vanished. In the twinkling of an eye, however, she was back again with hot water, soap, sponge, etc., and was soon mopping the copious stain with a damp flannel, kneeling and looking beautiful as she knelt.

"Then did I throw myself into a chair exhausted with excitement, and I may say agony of mind, and I exclaimed to myself, 'Good Heavens, if the blessed creature does really help me in this frightful emergency, I will give her a sovereign. It will be cheap at a sovereign; yes, she shall have twenty shillings.' "

How well this is all told—the sudden respect which the visitor feels, in the moment of his humiliation, for the somewhat hard girl who alone can help him. And the first impulse which he has is of course to make her a handsome present. One pound, or ten yen, is a big present for a servant girl. But we are only at the beginning of the psychological part of the story. As the girl sponges, gradually the stains upon the carpet disappear. It is a labour of twenty minutes, but it is successful. At last the stains entirely disappear, and the poet says that his "guardian angel" rose to her feet, and asks him with a quiet smile, as if it were all the most natural thing in the world, "if I should have a cup of tea." So the agony is over. But the gratitude is not now quite so strong as at first. He now thinks that he must certainly give her fifteen shillings.

Presently his friends come back; and of course they tell him how terribly particular they are about their carpet. And he describes all the agitation which their remarks produce in his mind, with admirable humour. But the end of the story is this—

"I forgot to say that I presented my 'guardian-angel' with the sum of five shillings. And this is the end of a true story."

There is a fine little study of human nature here; and this study is what raises the narrative far above anecdote. The truth to actual life of the feelings described is unimpeachable. Probably every one of us has had the same waxing and waning of generous impulse—gratitude first impelling us to be too kind, and reason and selfishness combining later on to reduce the promised reward.

There is a comic sketch for you; it is trifling, of course, because the humorous side of things must always be trifling. But a trifling subject does not necessarily mean a trifling sketch. A philosopher can write about a broomstick, and a really artistic sketch-writer can deal with almost any subject. One of the best sketch writers, though not the best of modern times was the great French novelist, Alphonse Daudet. Daudet is chiefly known through his novels; but that is only because it requires more than popular taste to appreciate his delightful little sketches. Now, talking about trifling subjects, what do you think of eating as a subject? Surely that is trifling enough. But a number of Daudet's sketches are all about eating; he made a series of them, each describing the memory relating to some one national dish eaten in a foreign country. I may attempt to indicate the character of the set, by roughly translating to you the sketch entitled "La Bouillabaisse," the name of a famous dish about which the English poet Thackeray wrote a very beautiful meditative poem. Here is an illustration of how two great artistic minds, though very differently constituted, can alike find inspiration in small and commonplace things.

"We were sailing along the Sardinian coast. It was early morning. The rowers were rowing very slowly; and I, leaning over the edge of the boat, looked down into the sea, which was as transparent as a mountain spring, and illuminated by the sun even to the very bottom. Jelly-fish and star-fish were visible among the weeds below. Immense lobsters were resting there motionless as if asleep, with their long horns resting upon the fine sand. And all this was to be seen at a depth of eighteen or twenty feet, in a queer artificial way that made one think of looking into a great aquarium of crystal. At the prow of the boat a fisherman, standing erect, with a long split reed in hand, suddenly made a sign to the rowers—*piano*, *piano!* (go softly—softly)—and suddenly between the points of his fishing-trident he

displayed suspended a beautiful lobster, stretching out his claws in a fit of terror which showed that he was still imperfectly awakened. Beside me another boatman kept throwing his line on the surface of the water, in the wake of the boat, and continually brought up marvellous little fishes, which, in dying, took a thousand different shapes of changing colour. It was like an agony looked at through a prism.

"The fishing was over; we went on shore and climbed amongst the great high grey rocks. Quickly a fire was lighted—a fire that looked so pale in the great light of the sun!—large slices of bread were cut and heaped upon little plates of red earthenware; and there we took our places, seated, around the cooking pot, each with his plate held in readiness, inhaling with delight the odour of the cooking. . . . And was it the landscape—or the earth—or that great horizon of sky and water? I do not know, but I never in my life ate anything better than that lobster Bouillabaisse, and afterwards what a delightful siesta we had upon the sand!—our sleep still full of the rocking sensation of the sea, whose myriad little scale-flashings of light still seemed to be palpitating before our eyes."

That is all, but it tells you all the feelings of one happy day, and the incidents, and the things heard and smelled and seen; and you can not forget. That is the sketch in the very best meaning of the word. How short it is, and how bright. And Daudet has written a great many sketches. Perhaps you do not know that one of them, or a series of them, treat of Japanese subjects. In Paris Daudet made the acquaintance of Philipp Franz von Siebold, whose name is well known as a scientific explorer of Japan. Siebold was then trying to interest Napoleon III in the project of a great European commercial company, to be organized for the purpose of trading with Japan. Daudet was very much interested by Siebold, not in the commercial company which he was attempting to form, but in Japanese literature and art, of which scarcely anything was then

known. Siebold especially delighted Daudet by stories of the Japanese theatre. "I will give you," he said to Daudet, "a beautiful Japanese tragedy, called 'The Blind Emperor'; we shall translate it together, and you will publish it in French, and everybody will be delighted." Daudet wanted very much to do so. But at that time Siebold was seventy-two years of age, his memory a little weak, and his energies rapidly failing. He kept putting off the fulfilment of his promise, up to the time when he left Paris forever; and Daudet actually went to Germany after him, in order to get that Japanese tragedy. He found Siebold; and Siebold had the tragedy all ready, he said, to give him —but he died only the night after. So Daudet never got the tragedy. I wonder if there is any tragedy of that name. But I was going to tell you that Daudet told his Siebold experiences in a series of delicious little sketches whose value happens to be quite independent of the existence of the tragedy. Perhaps you will not be uninterested in a free translation of the prose, which is touching. Daudet is describing the house of Siebold on the morning of his death.

"People were going in and coming out, looking very sad. One felt that in that little house something had happened, too much of a catastrophe for so small a house to contain, and therefore issuing from it, overflowing from it, like a source of grief. On arriving I heard sobs inside. It was at the end of the little corridor, the room where he was lying —a large room, encumbered and low-lighted like a classroom. I saw there a long table of plain white wood—heaps of books and manuscripts—a glass case containing collections—picture books bound in embroidered silks; on the wall were hanging Japanese weapons, some prints, several large maps; and in the midst of all this disorder of travel and of study, the Colonel was lying in his bed with his long white beard descending over his dress, and his poor niece kneeling and weeping in a corner. Siebold had died suddenly in the night.

"I left Munich the same evening, not having the courage to intrude upon all that grief merely in order to gratify a literary whim; and that is how it happened that I never knew anything about the marvellous Japanese tragedy except its title, *'l'Empereur Aveugle.'* But since that time we had to see the performance of another tragedy to which that title might very well have been given—a terrible tragedy full of blood and tears; and that was not a Japanese tragedy at all."

He is referring to the Franco-Prussian War and the folly of Napoleon III who caused it. It was Napoleon III who was really the blind emperor.

Altogether it may be said that the sketch is particularly French, as a special department of literature, and I think that it ought to become especially Japanese, because the genius of the race is in the direction of the sketch. But at present the best models to study are nearly all French. Daudet is but one of a host. Maupassant is another and a greater—many of his wonderful so-called stories being really sketches, not stories. For example, three of his compositions described three different things which he happened to see while travelling on a train. Incidents of human life thus seen and powerfully described, may have an emotional interest much greater than that of the average story; and yet we must not call them stories. Anatole France, perhaps the greatest French man of letters today, and Jules Lemaître, the greatest living French critic, are both of them admirable sketch-writers, as well as story-tellers. The first great realistic attempt in this direction was probably that of Prosper Mérimée; and Flaubert carried the method to great perfection. I spoke of these men before as story-tellers, not as sketch-writers. The best example of the sketch by Mérimée is the account of the storming of a fort, told by a soldier who was one of the storming party. As a sketch that has never been surpassed. But today in France there are published every month hundreds

of sketches, and a very considerable number of them are good. In England the novel has been too popular to allow of the same development. But there are good English sketch writers; and these are particularly noticeable in books of travel—for example, "Eothen," by Kinglake, the historian,—a little book entirely formed of exquisite sketches which will certainly live after Kinglake's historical work has been entirely forgotten.

Of course this book is representative only of the travel-sketch—a kind apart. Now there is one thing to notice about the conservatism of English literary feeling, as compared to the French, in regard to the sketch. In England a volume of sketches will be favourably considered only upon condition that the sketches be consecutive—that they figure in one series of events, or that they all have some other form of interconnection. Thus the little book of travel by Kinglake and the travel sketches by Stevenson depended much for their popularity upon the fact that they were all upon kindred subjects, and strung together by a train of narrative. This is true even of the older sketch work in England—that of Thackeray; that of the famous Dr. Brown of Edinburgh, who wrote the delicious book about the feelings and thoughts of a little girl; that of the eighteenth century sketch-writers of the school of Addison and Steele. But it is quite different with French work. The French artist of today can make a volume of sketches no one of which has the least relation to the other; and his work is never criticized upon that score. All that is insisted upon is the quality of the production; each sketch should be a complete work of art in itself. This being the case, it is of no more importance whether the sketches be related to each other than whether the paintings in a picture gallery happen all to be on the same subject. This freedom will certainly be enjoyed later on by men of letters—that is the tendency. But there is still a great deal of

foolish conservatism, and writers like Kipling, who attempt to make sketches the material of their books, are judged to have broken the literary canons unless the sketches have some connection between them.

As I have said before, the various capabilities of the sketch cannot be properly suggested without some illustrative fragments; and I must quote one or two examples more. The humorous sketch, the little sketch of incident, the little sketch of memory—the memory of acquaintanceship or travel—we have noticed. You can easily imagine a hundred kinds of each. But I have not yet said anything about another kind of sketch which is now likely to come into fashion—the sketch of psychological impressions. It must be interesting, even if scientific; and it may be both. The best usually are. American literature first gave strong examples of work in this particular direction—that is, in English literature proper. But it is significant that Dr. Holmes, the pioneer in it, studied a long time in France, and, though no imitator, he was no doubt much influenced by the best quality of French sketch work. Then again, his training in science—first as a practising physician and afterwards as a professor of anatomy in a medical school—naturally inclined him to the consideration of matter altogether outside of the beaten tracks. Very slight happenings take, in such a mind, an importance which extends far beyond the range of the common mind. And his great book, the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," now known wherever the English language is spoken, entirely consists of little sketches about very ordinary things considered in a very extraordinary way—for example, the mystery of the charm that exists in certain human voices. He hears a child speak, or a woman, and asks himself why the sweetness of the tone pleases so much—and tells us at the same time of memories which the voice awakens in his mind.

We all have vague notions about these things, but we seldom try to define them. Indeed, it requires a very great talent to define them to any literary purpose. But listen to this:

"There are sweet voices among us, we all know, and voices not musical, it may be, to those who hear them for the first time, yet sweeter to us than any we shall hear until we listen to some warbling angel in the overture to that eternity of blissful harmony we hope to enjoy. But why should I tell lies? I never heard but two voices in my life that frightened me by their sweetness. Yes, frightened me. They made me feel as if there might be constituted a creature with such a chord in her voice to some string in another's soul that if she but spoke, he would leave all and follow her though it were into the jaws of Erebus.

"Whose were those two voices that bewitched me so? They both belonged to German women. One was a chamber-maid—not otherwise fascinating. The key of my room at a certain great hotel was missing, and this Teutonic maiden was summoned to give information respecting it. The simple soul was evidently not long from her motherland, and spoke with sweet uncertainty of dialect. But to hear her wonder and lament and suggest with soft liquid inflections and low sad murmurs, in tones as full of serious tenderness for the fate of the lost key as if it had been a child that had strayed from its mother, was so winning that, had her features and figure been as delicious as her accents,—if she had looked like the marble Clytie, for example, why I should have drowned myself."

Why would he have drowned himself? Because, he tells us, in that case he would want to marry her; and if he had married her, it would have been a case of *mésalliance*, according to the rules of society to which he belonged,—and that would have made a great deal of unhappiness for both of them and for their children. And it would therefore have been better for the sake of future generations, as well

as his own, that he should have drowned himself. But now let us hear him describe the other voice of another German woman:

"That voice had so much of *woman* in it,—muliebrity, as well as femininity;—no self-assertion, such as free suffrage introduces into every word and movement; large vigorous nature, running back to those huge-limbed Germans of Tacitus, but subdued by the reverential training and tuned by the kindly culture of fifty generations." And he goes on to tell us no American woman could possibly have such a beautiful voice, because no American woman has had the cultured ancestors whose influences combined to make the sweetness of that voice. Remember that it is an American who is speaking—but he speaks the truth. He means that in the voice of this lady there was at once sweetness and a strength that gave the impression of everything at once wifely and womanly,—of everything that is implied in the beautiful German term "mother soul" and of "centuries of habitual obedience and delicacy and desire to please."

He has one more reminiscence to give us, about the voice of a child; and the experience is a painful one. It is not every doctor who can write of such a memory with such fine feeling.

"Ah, but I must not forget that dear little child I saw and heard in a French hospital. Between two and three years old. Fell out of her chair and snapped both thighbones. Lying in bed patient, gentle. Rough students round her, some in white aprons, looking fearfully businesslike; but the child was placid—perfectly still. I spoke to her and the blessed little creature answered me in a voice of such heavenly sweetness, and with that reedy thrill in it which you have heard in the thrush's even-song, that I seem to hear it at this moment, while I am writing, so many, many years afterward. "*C'est tout comme un serin*" (It is quite like a canary bird), said the French student at my side."

He goes on to say that there was an old story to the effect that most human beings were devils, who were born for a respite into the state of men and women, and that considering the wicked side of human nature the story might seem true; but those who have heard certain sweet voices must be assured that all human beings have not been devils —and that some heavenly spirits must have been born among them, as by accident. This is a very pretty example of a little sketch of sensation. The whole book is made of dainty reflections and memories of this sort, interspersed with bits of arguments and conversation and commentary. However, the fact that all the parts are united by the thinnest possible thread of a story certainly helped the book to the great success which it obtained in conservative England.

Yet another kind of sketch work is that which offers us a picture of something very large within a very small space, like a glimpse of the heavens by night, or the geographical configuration of a whole country. This can be done quite as certainly as it might be done in mosaic, or in very skilful painting, or by a coloured photograph. For example, Ruskin has described the whole of Italy in about half a page. Of course in order to do such a thing as this, complete knowledge of the subject, with all its details, must first be acquired; only then can we know how to make the great lines of the picture quite accurate and to give the proper sense of proportion. See how Ruskin does it. We all have in our minds a vague picture or idea of Italy. This helps us to collect and to define. It was not written originally as a sketch; but it is a sketch quite detached from its context, and altogether complete in itself.

"We are accustomed to hear the South of Italy spoken of as a beautiful country; its mountain forms are graceful above others, its sea-bays are exquisite in outline and hue; but it is only beautiful in superficial aspect. In closer detail it is wild and melancholy. Its forests are sombre-

leaved, labyrinth-stemmed; the carubbe, the olive, the laurel, and ilix are alike in that strange feverish twisting of their branches, as if in spasms of half human pain. Avernus forests; one fears to break their boughs, lest they should cry to us from the rents; the rocks they shade are of ashes or thrice-molten lava; iron sponge, whose every pore has been filled with fire. Silent villages, earthquake shaken, without commerce, without industry, without knowledge, without hope, gleam in white ruin from hillside to hillside; winding wrecks of immemorial wars surround the dust of cities long forsaken; the mountain streams moan through the cold arches of their foundation, green with weed, and rage over the heaps of their fallen towers; far above, in thunder-blue serration, stand the eternal edges of the angry Apennine, dark with rolling impendence of volcanic cloud."

There is here not merely a suggestion of beauty seen far away and of ghastliness seen near at hand but also suggestions of old mythology, old Greek primal settlements on the Italian coasts, old cataclysms, old decay of wealth and commerce—in short, suggestions about everything characteristic of the modern state of the country. To produce this kind of work one must know imagination does not help us. The sentences each and all represent successive personal experience. From the first example which I gave you to the last there is a range of extraordinary possibility, The very simplest power may here be contrasted with the very greatest. I think we did well to begin with the playful and end with the majestic. All these are possible within the compass of the sketch.

Now I may close with a brief suggestion about a modern tendency in the literature of the sketch. It is not my own; I found it the other day in the work of the greatest sketch writer at present living—in the work of that wonderful French author who has given an account of what he saw on the way to Pekin, after the late war. He describes a great many things too horrible even to mention in a lecture,

and many very touching things, and many strange things; and the general effect of the book is to leave in the reader's mind a very great feeling of regret and sympathy for China. In spite of the weather and the horrors, and difficulties of many kinds, he was able to visit the great memorial temple of Confucius, and to give us wonderful pictures representing every part of it. Now the most impressive thing was a sentence inscribed upon some tablets in one of the rooms there—inscribed from very ancient time; and it was translated to him as signifying these words: "The literature of the Future will be the literature of Pity." Very probably the effect of reading this ancient prophecy was greatly increased by the previous experiences of the writer, who had passed out of the waste of horrors and death, and absence of all pity, out of the plains where dogs were devouring the dead, into that solemn quietude, where the tablet was suspended. I do not know whether the translation would be questioned by scholars or not. But if the rendering of the characters was correct, that old Chinese prophecy about the future of literature certainly startles us by its truth. That is the tendency of the best thought and the best feeling of this literary age in the West. The literature of the future will be the literature of pity—pity in the old Roman sense, and in the old Greek sense, which did not mean contempt mixed with pity, but pure sympathy with all forms of human suffering. I think that the modern word "humanity" would best express what the Greeks meant by pity. Now the kind of writing which has been the subject of this lecture is especially suited to the Literature of Pity. It is by giving to the world little pictures of life and thought and feeling, joy and sorrow, gladness and gloom, that the average mind can best be awakened to a final sense of what the age most profoundly needs—the sense of unselfish sympathy. And here we may end our lecture on the Sketch.

CHAPTER VIII

THE POETRY OF GEORGE MEREDITH

At the present time (1900) scarcely any English poet is more in vogue than George Meredith. His popularity is comparatively new, but it is founded upon solid excellence of a very extraordinary kind. George Meredith is an exception to general rules—even to the rule that a great poet is scarcely ever a great prose writer; for he was known to the public as a novelist for half a century before he began to be known as a poet. Today he is so often quoted from, so often referred to, that we cannot ignore him in the course of lectures upon English literature.

He is now nearly seventy-two years old, having been born in 1828. He studied mostly in Germany, and studied law, but he had scarcely left his university when he resolved to abandon law and devote his life to literature. Returning to England he published his first book, a volume of poems, in 1851. It attracted no notice at all. In 1856 his next book appeared, called "The Shaving of Shagpat," a wonderful fairy-tale, written in imitation of the Arabian Nights with Arabian characters and scenery. It remains the best thing of the kind ever done by any European writer, but the kind was not popular, and only a few of the great poets and critics noticed what a wonderful book it was. After that Meredith took up novel writing, studying English life and character in an entirely new way. But he was not at first able to attract much attention. His novels were too scholarly and too psychological. Ten years from the date of his first volume of poems, in 1862, he published another book of verses, entitled "Modern Love." This attracted the notice of Swinburne, but of scarcely anybody else, and Meredith went back to novel writing.

Twenty years later, in 1883, a third volume of poems appeared, "Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth." This book obtained some critical praise, but only the cultivated men of letters appreciated it. More novels followed, and in 1887 and 1888 appeared the last volumes of poems, "Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life," and "A Reading of Earth." Since then Meredith has chiefly written novels, but occasionally he writes poems. Success came to him only in old age—within the last twenty years. It is not within the purpose of this lecture to speak of his novels at all; we shall deal only with his poetry.

At the first sight of such poetry a good judge would naturally exclaim, "How is it that I never heard of this wonderful poet before?" But a further examination will easily furnish the reason. Meredith is uncommonly difficult as well as uncommonly deep. He has the obscurity of Browning, and yet a profundity exceeding Browning's; he is essentially a psychological poet, but he is also an evolutional philosopher, which Browning scarcely was. He did not study in Germany for nothing, and he alone of all living Englishmen really expresses the whole philosophy of the modern scientific age. Now such a man necessarily found himself in a peculiar position. The older thinkers of his own time could scarcely understand him; he was uttering new thoughts, and uttering them often in a German rather than in an English way. The younger thinkers of the period were still at school or in the university when he began to express himself. His audience was therefore extremely small at first. Now it is very large, and he is known as well in France and Germany as at home, but we may say that he gave his whole life for this success.

A word now about his philosophy. Meredith is a thinker of the broadest and most advanced type, but he is essentially optimistic—that is, he considers all things as an evolutionist, but also as one who believes that the tendency of the laws which govern the universe is toward the highest

possible good. He believes the world to be the best possible world which man could desire, and he thinks that all the unhappiness and folly of men is due only to ignorance and to weakness. He proclaims that the world can give every joy and every pleasure possible to those who are both wise and strong. Above all else he preaches the duty of moral strength—the power to control our passions and impulses. He has, however, very little compassion in him; he is a terribly stern teacher, never pitying weakness, never forgiving ignorance. He never talks of any theological God —not at least as a God to believe in; but you get from all his poetry the general impression that he considers the working of the universe divine. It will not be necessary to say more here about his opinions, because we shall find them better expressed in his poems than they could be in any attempt at a brief *résumé*.

I think that it will be better to take some of his simpler poems first, for study; indeed the longer ones are very difficult and would require much explanation as well as paraphrasing. The shorter ones will better serve the first purpose of showing you how different this man's poetry is from that of any other English poet of the time. The first example will be from "Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life." I need not explain to you the meaning of the word "Tragic." But the tragedies in which Meredith is interested are never tragedies of mere physical pain. There may be some killing in them, but the shedding of blood does not mean the tragedy. "King Harald's Trance" is a good illustration of this.

Harald—a name common in Scandinavian history—we may suppose to be a Norwegian Viking. The Vikings of old Norway were the most terrible men that ever lived, but they were also among the grandest and noblest. Their trade was war, their religion was war, their idea of happiness after death was still war—eternal war in heaven, ghostly fighting on the side of the gods. Such an idea of

life requires many great qualities as well as natural fearlessness and great physical strength. These men had to learn from childhood not only how to fight, but how to control their passions, for in fighting, you know that the man who first gets angry is almost certain to get beaten. The Norse character was above all things a character of great self-mastery, and the finer qualities of it are those which have also made the finer qualities of both the German and the English speaking races of the modern world. It occurred to the poet Meredith to study such a character among its ancient surroundings, and among the most trying possible circumstances. What could break down such mighty strength? What could conquer such iron hearts? We are going to see.

I

Sword in length a reaping-hook amain
Harald sheared his field, blood up to shank;
'Mid the swathes of slain
First at moonrise drank.

II

Thereof hunger, as for meats the knife,
Pricked his ribs, in one sharp spur to reach
Home and his young wife,
By the sea-ford beach.

III

After battle keen to feed was he,
Smoking flesh the thresher washed down fast,
Like an angry sea
Ships from keel to mast.

IV

Name us glory, singer, name us pride,
Matching Harald's in his deeds of strength;
Chiefs, wife, sword by side,
Foeman stretched their length.

V

Half a winter night the toasts hurrahed
Crowned him, clothed him, trumpeted him high,
Till awink he bade,
Wife to chamber fly.

Mightily Harald, as a reaper in a field of corn mows down the grain, with his scythe-long sword mowed down the enemy—standing in blood up to his ankles. All day he slew, and when the battle was finished after dark and the dead lay all about him, like the swathes of grain cut down by reapers, then for the first time he was able to drink, as the moon began to rise.

Then the great effort and excitement of the battle left him hungry. His hunger pricked him like a knife—impelled him to mount his horse and gallop straight home at full speed to where his young wife was waiting for news of him.

He always ate prodigiously after fighting; to see him eating roast meat and washing it down his great throat with drinks of ale after a battle, made one think of the spectacle of a stormy sea swallowing ships.

Then came the customary banqueting and singing and drinking. Professional singers sang songs in praise of his fighting that day, while he sat enthroned among his warriors, with his sword by his side, and his young wife seated at his right hand. All his enemies were dead.

For half the night the drinking and singing continued. Harald had to sit there and hear himself praised, and drink whenever his own health was drunk to—such was the custom. But when the strong men had begun to show the influence of liquor too much, the king made a sign to his wife to withdraw to her own room. When the warriors drank too much, it was not a time for women to be present.

This is the substance of the first part of the poem. Observe that Harald is never spoken of as having been fatigued by his battle; fighting only makes him hungry. This is a

giant and probably a kindly giant in his way; we see that he is fond of his young wife. But he cannot retire from the banquet according to the custom of his people. He must drink with everybody after the great victory. And he drinks so much that he remains like a dead man for three days. Only after that, his great strength is to be tried.

VI

Twice the sun had mounted, twice had sunk,
Ere his ears took sound;—he lay for dead;
Mountain on his trunk,
Ocean on his head.

VII

Clamped to couch, his fiery hearing sucked
Whispers that at heart made iron-clang;
Here fool-women clucked,
There men held harangue.

VIII

Burial to fit their lord of war,
They decreed him; hailed the kingling, ha!
Hateful! but this Thor
Failed a weak lamb's baa.

IX

King they hailed a branchlet, shaped to fare,
Weighted so, like quaking shingle-spume,
When his blood's own heir
Ripened in the womb.

Twice the sun had risen and had set, yet Harald had not stirred. His hearing returned; but he could not move, could not speak, could not open his eyes. Upon his breast there seemed to be a weight like the weight of a mountain keeping him down; above his head it seemed to him that there was a whole ocean—in his head there was the sound of it.

But soon other sounds came to his ears, as he lay upon his bed, as if fixed to it with bands of iron. He heard whispers that made a disturbance at his heart. He heard women cluttering like hens; he heard also men making speeches.

What were they making speeches about? About him. He heard them say that he was dead; that he must be grandly buried like a great warrior and king. And he heard them talk of the new king—rather, of the kingling. Why did they appoint so weak a man to be king? How quickly he could stop all that with a word. But although he had been as strong and terrible as the God Thor, he could not now even make a noise like the bleat of a lamb.

Still he listened, he heard more. This king that was to be was only very distantly related to him. Such a man never could have force of will to rule the men of that country. He would have no more power than sea foam on a beach of rocks. But why should a king have been elected at all? Was not his own wife soon to become a mother? His child would be a man fit to rule. While the child was still a child, the chiefs could govern. Why did they elect that other?

He is going to learn why—and this is the beginning of the terrible part of the poem.

X

Still he heard, and dog-like, hog-like, ran
Nose of hearing till his blind sight saw:
Woman stood with man,
Mounting low, at paw.

XI

Woman, man, they mounted; they spake a thing
Armed to split a mountain, sunder seas:
Still the frozen king
Lay out and felt him freeze.

XII

Dog-like, hog-like, horse-like now he raced,
Riderless, in ghost across a ground
Flint of breast, blank-faced,
Past the fleshly bound.

Still the King listened in his trance, and he listened until his hearing acted for him as a dog acts for the hunter, or as a wild hog acts, following the scents of the roots that he wants even under the surface of the ground. Alone by his hearing he perceived what was going on; his eyes could not see, but his mind saw even more clearly than eyes. His young wife had been false to him; she was talking to another man even there within his own house; they were kissing each other, they were touching each other, they were speaking wickedness, such wickedness as would have power to split a mountain or to separate the waters of the sea—crime such as would destroy the world. But he, the giant they betrayed, the King they betrayed, the husband, he could not move. Coldness of death is about him; he feels his blood freezing. O! for the days when he could renew his strength in a moment merely by filling his great lungs with the sea winds. "If I could only breathe the sea wind for one second," he thinks, "then I could rise up." And the ghost of him really seeks the shore of the sea, the flint-breasted naked rocks of the beach—racing like a horse in order to get strength from the sea wind to awaken the great inert body. When the ghost gets in, then the King can wake.

XIII

Smell of brine his nostrils filled with might,
Nostrils quickened eyelids, eyelids hand;
Hand for sword at right
Groped, the great haft spanned.

XIV

Wonder struck to ice his people's eyes;
Him they saw, the prone upon the bier,
Sheer from backbone rise,
Sword-uplifting peer.

XV

Sitting did he breath against that blade,
Standing kiss it for that proof of life,
Strode, as netters wade
Straightway to his wife.

Here the scene has suddenly changed. We are on the sea shore. But you will remember that in the last of the verses before paraphrased, we were in the house, and the man imagined himself moving as a ghost on the sea-shore in search of strength. Before we paraphrase again, it is necessary to understand this. First I must tell you that Meredith does not believe in ghosts, and does not want us to imagine that the man's spirit was really moving outside of his body. He has been describing only the feeling and imagination of the warrior, in the state between life and death. It was the custom to burn the dead body of a great sea-king on the sea shore, and you must imagine that the body has been carried down to the shore to be burnt. Then the smell of the sea really revived him. And this explanation is further required by the fact that later on, Harald is represented in full armour, with his helmet upon his head and his sword laid by his side. It was a custom to burn the warrior with his arms and armour. All we have been reading about the ghost represents only what Harald felt, just before his awakening. Now we will paraphrase: The smell of the sea came to him; he breathed the sea wind, and, as he breathed it, it seemed to fill him with strength. He opened his eyes, he saw; at once he felt at his right hand for his sword, which he knew ought to be there. He felt the handle, grasped it.

Then he sat up on the bier, and his men were utterly astonished, for they had thought him dead; but lo! he had risen up straight to a sitting posture. They stared motionless, as if their eyes had been frozen.

Sitting up, Harald still doubted whether he was really alive. He lifted the blade of his sword to his lips, and breathed upon it. Seeing his own breath on the great steel, he kissed the sword affectionately, out of gratitude to find himself alive again. Then standing up he advanced toward his wife—slowly, slowly,—as a fisherman or a bird catcher advances, wading in water, against a current.

XVI

Her he eyed: his judgment was one word,
"Foul-bed!"—and she fell;—the blow clove two.
Fearful for the third
All their breath indrew.

XVII

Morning danced along the waves to beach;
Dumb his chiefs fetched breath for what might hap,
Glassily on each
Stared the iron cap.

XVIII

Sudden, as it were a monster oak
Split to yield a limb by stress of heat,
Strained he, staggered, broke
Doubled at their feet.

He looked upon her face, judged her guilt, expressed that judgment by the single word "Adulteress"—and struck. His blow killed two, for she was about to become a mother. Whom would he kill next? Who was the guilty man? Evidently he was not there; or perhaps Harald did not know yet who he was. Everybody waited in silent terror.

The sun rose, sending his gold light dancing over the

waves from the East. And still the men stood there in silent fear. Harald said nothing, did not move; but he looked at each man with a glassy stare, with the look of one who does not find what he is waiting for.

Then suddenly, like a great oak tree, too large to be cut with the ax and therefore possible only to split by the use of fire, the giant seemed to make a sudden effort, he moved, he staggered, he fell dead at their feet.

What is the deeper meaning of this terrible poem, founded upon an historical fact? Simply that moral pain is much more powerful than physical pain—that it is capable of breaking down any strength. Harald could not be killed in battle under ordinary circumstances; fighting could not even tire him, it only made him hungry and thirsty. No physical excess could injure that body of iron. His vast eating and drinking only gave him a heavy sleep. But when he was wounded in his affections, by the treachery of the only being whom he could love and trust, then his heart burst. He dies in the poem magnificently, even like a moral hero, containing himself perfectly until death takes him away. But the teaching of the story is very awful as well as very true.

The remarkable thing to notice about this poetry is its compression, a compression that only seems to make the colour more vivid and the emotion more forceful. In order to paraphrase it intelligibly one must use two or three times as many words as the poet uses. Browning has the same strange power, and in many ways Meredith strongly resembles Browning. But he is much more philosophical, as we see later on.

Of ballads written in the true ballad form, there are not more than three or four in the whole book, notwithstanding the title, "Ballads and Poems." Another ballad more famous than that which I have quoted is called "Archduchess Anne," a title which at once makes us think of various episodes in Austrian history. It is a splendid piece

of psychological study, but less suitable for quotation than the poem on King Harald, for it is very long. The object of the poet is to show the consequences of a foolish act on the part of a person ruling the destiny of a nation. Anne is practically a queen; and she is married. But she takes a strong fancy to a handsome man among her courtiers, Count Louis. In others words, she falls in love with him. He takes every advantage of the situation, because he is both diplomatic and selfish. The Archduchess rules her own cabinet; but the Count soon learns how to rule her; consequently he gets all the power of the government into his hands. And when he has done this, he shows his selfishness. She immediately reassumes her power, and then there is a political quarrel. The state is divided in two parties. Count Louis then does what no gentleman under the circumstances could very well do, he marries a young wife, and brings her to the court. Of course, when there is, or has been, illegitimate love in high places, the fact can not be very well concealed. Everybody knows it. The whole court knows that the Queen has loved Count Louis, and that his marriage, and, above all, the bringing of his wife to the court is a cruel insult. One of the Queen's faithful servants, an old general, determines to avenge her if he can ever get a chance. And the chance comes. Count Louis soon afterwards incites a revolution, raises an army and advances to battle. The old general meets him, captures him by a cunning trick, and writes the Queen a letter, saying, "I have him." But the old general does not quite understand a woman's heart. When a good woman—and by "good" I mean especially affectionate—has once loved a man, it is scarcely possible that anything could make her afterwards really hate him. There was of course the extraordinary case of Christina of Sweden, who had her lover stabbed to death before her eyes, but in such a case as that we do not believe there was a real affection at any time. Anne is in a very difficult position; she is very angry with

the prisoner, but she secretly loves him. How is she to answer the letter of her general? If she says, "Do not kill him," the general will think that she is very fond of him. If she says, "Kill him," the general will think that she is revengeful and the whole world will think the same thing. If she says, "Let him go free," that will only make the general despise her, not to speak of all the political trouble that would follow. If she says, "Send him to me that he may be imprisoned at once," that would seem to the world as if she wished to make love to the prisoner by force, to take him away from his wife. Whatever she does will seem in some way wrong. She has placed herself in a false position to begin with; and now she does not know what to do. What she really wishes is a reconciliation with the man who has been so base to her, but she dares not say that to the leader of her armies. Therefore she writes a diplomatic letter to him, hoping that he can understand it. She says that she does not want to be too severe; she speaks of religion, she trusts that her general will know what to do. He determines that the man shall die as quickly as possible.

> Her words he took, her nods and winks
> Treated as woman's fog,
> The man-dog for his mistress thinks,
> Not less her faithful dog.
>
> She hugged a cloak old Kraken ripped,
> Disguise to him he loathed;
> Your mercy, madam, shows you stripped,
> While mine will keep you clothed.

That is, the old soldier determined to act exactly upon the words of the letter; as for suggestions, he refused to pay any attention to them. "Women," he thought, "are too weak. She wants to hide her feelings from me. And she wants to be merciful. By law the man is a traitor, and ought to be hanged. But I shall shoot him instead—

give him the death of a soldier, that is mercy enough. My mercy will hide the Queen's shame; her mercy would proclaim that shame to the whole world." So Count Louis is shot. Before this, however, the young wife of Count Louis goes to the Archduchess to beg for her husband's life, and this is a very touching part of the poem. Of course this innocent young wife does not know what has happened in the past, and can not know what pain her presence is giving.

The Countess Louis from her head
  Drew veil, "Great Lady, hear!
My husband deems your Justice dread,
  I know you Mercy dear.

His error upon him may fall,
  He will not breath a nay.
I am his helpless mate in all,
  Except for grace to pray.

Perchance on me his choice inclined,
  To give his house an heir;
I had not marriage with his mind,—
  His counsel could not share.

I brought no portion for his weal
  But this one instinct true,
Which bids me in my weakness kneel
  Archduchess Anne, to you.

Now you can see that every word here innocently uttered would seem to the Archduchess very cunning or very stupid. Did the young wife know the secret, then every word would be like turning a knife in the heart of the Archduchess. And if she did not know, how horribly stupid she must be to say what seems so wicked. Therefore she is driven away at once. But after she has gone, the Archduchess has to think about what was said, and she feels that after all the young wife really did the very best thing that a woman could have done to save her husband.

Yet it is too late to save him. Presently the news comes that he has been shot. And the result is a civil war; for the party of Count Louis tries to avenge him. There is war also in the heart of the sovereign. How unutterably she hates her faithful old general; yet she must trust to him, for the kingdom is in danger. Pain and sorrow make Anne look already like an old woman. When the war is over she treats her general so ill that he is obliged to leave the country. By one fault, how much unhappiness and destruction comes to pass—revolution, civil war, and the ruin of many lives! And the poem ends with the quatrain often quoted in other connections than the present:

> And she that helped to slay, yet bade
> To spare the fated man,
> Great were her errors, but she had
> Great heart, Archduchess Anne.

Of course there is just a little bit of cruel irony in the statement, for it obliges us to ask the question whether a great heart can compensate for much foolishness, whether affection can excuse the ruin of a government. I think that the poet here is quietly opposing the moral of the beautiful old Bible story, about the woman forgiven "because she loved much"—*quia multum amavit*. One would say that a person holding the position of supreme ruler cannot be forgiven simply because she loved much, although we may pity her with all our hearts.

Pity is not a virtue with Meredith. He reminds us often of the old Jesuit doctrine, that pity is akin to concupiscence. For example, Meredith takes a ground strongly opposed to all romantic precedents when he treats of the question of adultery. From the time of the Middle Ages it was the custom of poets to represent unhappy wives secretly in love with strangers, or to paint the tragedies arising from the consequence of sexual jealousy. Even in all the versions of the story of King Arthur, our sympathies are invoked on

behalf of illegitimate love,—even in Tennyson. We sympathize a good deal with Lancelot and with Guinivere. In Dante, most religious of the old poets, we have a striking example of this appeal to pity in the story of Francesca di Rimini. And I need scarcely speak of various modern schools of poetry who have imitated the poets of the Middle Ages in this respect. Meredith takes the opposite view—represents the erring woman always as culpable, and praises the act of killing her. He gives evolutional reasons for this. For example, he takes an old Spanish love story, and tells it over again in a new way. There is a beautiful young wife alone at home. There is a terrible rascal of a husband, a fellow who spends all his time in drinking, gambling, fighting, and making love to other women. His wife gets tired of his neglect and his brutality and his viciousness. If he does not love her, somebody else shall. So she gets a secret lover, while her husband is away. This young man visits her. Suddenly her husband returns, and now we leave Meredith to moralize the situation. I think that you will find it both new and interesting.

Thundered then her lord of thunders
Burst the door, and flashing sword
Loud disgorged the woman's title,
Condemnation in one word.

Grand by righteous wrath transfigured
Towers the husband who provides
In his person judge and witness,
Death black doorkeeper besides!

. . . . .

How though he hath squandered Honour!
High of Honour let him scold:
Gilding of the man's possession,
'Tis the woman's coin of gold.

She, inheriting from many
Bleeding mothers bleeding sense,

Feels 'twixt her and sharp-fanged nature
Honour first did plant the fence.

Nature that so shrieks for justice,
Honour's thirst that blood will slake,
These are women's eyelids, roughly
Mixed to write them saint or snake.

Never nature cherished women;
She throughout the sexes' war
Serves as temptress and betrayer,
Favouring man, the muscular.

. . . . .

Hard the task: your prison chamber
Widens not for lifted latch
Till the giant thews and sinews
Meet their Godlike overmatch.

Read that riddle; scorning pity's
Tears, of cockatrices shed!
When the heart is vowed for freedom,
Captaincy it yields to head.

The point upon which the poet here insists is the evolutional signification of female virtue and of all that relates to it. Evidently he does not believe that either men or women were very virtuous in the beginning—not at all; their knowledge of right and wrong had to be developed slowly through great sufferings in the course of thousands of years. In order that the modern woman may be virtuous as she is, millions of her ancestors must have suffered the experience that teaches the social worth of female honour. And a woman who today proves unfaithful to her marriage duty is sinning, not simply against modern society, but against the whole experience, the whole modern experience, of the human race. This would make the fault a great one, of course, but would not the fault of the man be as great? By what right, except the right of force, can he

punish her, if he himself be guilty of unfaithfulness? I am not sure what answer religion would give to these questions. But Meredith answers immediately and clearly. The fault of the woman is incomparably worse than the fault of the man. It is worse in relation to the injury done to society, to morality, to progress. Society is founded upon the family; the strength of society to defend itself against the enemy, to accumulate wealth, and to find happiness, depends upon the care and the love given to the children. It is in proportion to the love and care given to the young that a nation becomes strong. Now it is especially the mother's duty to look after the interests of the young. This requires no argument. And a sexual weakness upon her part means an injury done to the family in the sense of its very life. The whole interest of society depends upon the chastity and tenderness and moral force of its women. Moral weakness once begun among the women of the people, the decline of that race begins. So indeed perished the finest race that ever existed in this world—the old Greek race.

On the other hand, though unchastity on the part of the man be certainly condemnable—from a purely moral point of view equally condemnable—its consequences are not fraught with the same danger to society, because they are not of a character to destroy the family. Really the part of man in the great struggle of life is the part of the fighter. The all important thing for the man is to be strong. If he can be morally as well as physically strong, so much the better for the race; but the all important thing is that he shall be able to fight, to contend, to conquer. It is not through the man that the moral progress of society is directly effected; it is through the woman and the teaching of the young, it is through the tenderness and love of the home—the only place where a man can rest from his constant battle with the world. It is only in his own home that he can be as good as he may wish to be. Every good

home is a little nursing place of morality, a little garden in which the plants of honour and truth and courage and gentleness can be cultivated until they are strong enough to bear the frosts and the cold winds of the great outside world. In one generation home life may accomplish very little for the improvement of a race, but in the course of thousands of years it accomplishes everything. If men are kinder and wiser and better today than they were thousands of years ago, it is because of the virtues which have been cultivated in the family. Had the home of human history been a struggle between men only, the result would have been very different indeed, for competition and battle cultivate only the hard and fierce and cunning side of character. Taking all these facts together, the poet tells us very plainly that adultery is something which should never be forgiven in a woman, however it might be forgiven in a man, because the fault against human society is too great. And therefore he has written this poem especially to condemn those old romances in which illegitimate affection was the theme—in which, also, every effort was made to excite the sympathy of the reader with the sin of the woman. No sympathy has George Meredith; on the contrary, he praises the man who kills, in the line where he speaks of the sword—where he says that the good steel of the sword that killed was what every man ought to be—hard and penetrating, hard and terrible to deal with social wrong. It is very curious to compare this stern view of life with the tenderness of Michelet, in his books entitled "L'Amour" and "Les Femmes." Michelet actually says that in many cases the woman should be forgiven. The two opposing kinds of views thus expressed by two great men of different races do really suggest something of the difference of character in the races. Both men are liberal thinkers, both men studied the new philosophy. Yet how very antagonistic their teachings.

I do not wish to give you too much of the moral side of

Meredith at one time, for fear that it should become tiresome. So before we take up another philosophical poem, I should like to speak of a poem which is only emotional and descriptive—a tremendous poem, and certainly the greatest thing in verse that Meredith has composed. I mean "The Nuptials of Attila." In some parts it is very hard reading. In other parts it is unmatched in the splendour and strength of its verse.

First we must say a few words about the subject chosen. Doubtless you remember the apparition of Attila in Roman history. You have read how he came from the East with his tempestuous cavalry and threatened to destroy the whole of Western civilization. During his brief career Attila probably wielded the greatest power that has ever been united in the hands of one man. He controlled a larger portion of the earth's surface than that today controlled by the Russians, and he might have realized his dream of subduing all the West of Europe, had it not been for one act of folly. That was his marriage to a young girl called Ildico, whom he demanded from her parents against her will. On the night of the wedding there was great drinking and feasting, and when the King retired to the bridal chamber he had probably drunk to excess. At all events he died suddenly in the night, through the bursting of a blood-vessel; and his death saved Western civilization. There was not another leader in the vast army capable of keeping it together. The host broke up. The chiefs returned to their several countries, and the great empire of Attila melted away almost as suddenly as frost disappears in the morning sun. What became of Ildico nobody knows. It is the scene of the wedding night, and the scene of the morning following, that the poet describes.

First we have a few lines describing the power of Attila and the hunger of his army for more war:

> Flat as to an eagle's eye,
> Earth hung under Attila,

Sign for carnage gave he none.
In the peace of his disdain,
Sun and rain, and rain and sun,
Cherished men to wax again,
Crawl, and in their manner die,
On his people stood a frost.
Like the charger cut in stone,
Rearing stiff, the warrior host,
Which had life from him alone,
Craved the trumpets' eager note,
As the bridled earth the Spring.
Rusty was the trumpet's throat.
He let chief and prophet rave;
Venturous earth around him string
Threads of grass and slender rye,
Wave them, and untrampled wave.
O for the time when God did cry,
Eye and have, my Attila.

You must remember that Attila was called the Scourge of God. So terrible was the destruction that he wrought, that the Western world of the fifth century thought that he had been sent by God to destroy them as a punishment for sin. He himself accepted this name, and also called himself the Hammer of the World. His own words, translated into Latin, are said to have been "*Stella cadit, tellus fremit, en ego Malleus Orbis*" (the star falls, the earth shudders; lo! I am the hammer of the world.) But why this peace? Why does not Attila continue to destroy?

Scorn of conquest filled like sleep
Him that drank of havoc deep
When the Green Cat pawed the globe,
When his horsemen from his bow
Shot in sheaves.

This scorn of conquest was only induced by Attila's sudden love for a woman. Perhaps the girl Ildico would rather have died than been given to Attila; but she had to obey the will and words of the master, and there was no

opportunity given her to express her likes or dislikes—no opportunity even to kill herself, for she was well watched. White as death she appeared in her wedding robes upon the night of her awful marriage, and the wedding guests did not like to see her looking so white. Why should she not have been glad? Why should she not have blushed as a bride blushes? Some said that she loved another man; some said that she was frightened; but nobody knew and nobody was pleased, and the wedding ceremony went on. It was a strange banquet that she had to attend, for these terrible men lived upon horse-back, drank upon horse-back, ate upon horse-back. The wedding guests entered the hall in all the panoply of war, all mounted upon their battle steeds—not to sit down, but to ride furiously round the table.

Round the banquet-table's load
Scores of iron horsemen rode;
Chosen warriors, keen and hard;
Grain of threshing battle-dints;
Attila's fierce body-guard,
Smelling war like fire in flints.
Grant them peace be fugitive!
Iron-capped and iron-heeled
Each against his fellow's shield
Smote the spear-head, shouting, Live
Attila, my Attila,
Eagle, eagle of our breed,
Eagle, beak the lamb and feed!
Have her, and unleash us! live!
Attila, my Attila.

Now to understand how fearful a scene this must have appeared to the bride, you must understand that Ildico was a German girl of noble family representing the highest refinement and delicacy of the old civilization. To have given her to these savage people was, of course, a monstrous cruelty. She did not enjoy the wonderful displays of power

and barbaric luxury about her; she must have felt as one seated alone in the midst of an earth-quake.

> Fair she seemed, surpassingly;
> Soft, yet vivid as the stream
> Danube rolls in the moonbeam
> Through rock barriers;—but she smiled
> Never, she sat cold as salt.
> Open-mouthed as a young child
> Wondering with a mind at fault.
> Make the bed for Attila!
>
> Under the thin hoop of gold
> Whence in waves her hair outrolled,
> 'Twixt her brows the women saw
> Shadows of a vulture's claw
> Gript in flight; strange knots that sped
> Closing and dissolving aye;
> Such as wicked dreams betray
> When pale dawn creeps o'er the bed.
> They might show the common pang
> Known to virgins, in whom dread
> Hunts their bliss like famished hounds;—
> While the chiefs with roaring rounds
> Tossed her to her lord and sang
> Praise of him whose hand was large,
> Cheers for beauty, brought to yield,
> Chirrups of the trot afield,
> Hurrahs of the battle charge.

Here we suffer with her, so plainly does the figure of the girl appear before us, silent and white with little shadows of pain coming and going upon her young forehead, while all about her shakes the ground under the hoofs of the battle-horses, under the thunder roar of the songs and the clashing of steel on steel. These roaring horsemen are singing of other things than the past and the present; they are clamouring for the future, for more war, more slaughter, more destruction; they are shouting that even their horses are hungry for war.

Whisper it (the war signal), you sound a horn
To the grey beast in the stall!
Yea, he whinnies at a nod.
O, for sound of the trumpet notes!
O, for the time when thunder-shod,
He that scarce can munch his oats,
Hung on the peaks, brooded aloof,
Champed the grain of the wrath of God
Pressed a cloud on the covering roof,
Snorted out of the blackness fire!
Scarlet broke the sky, and down,
Hammering West with print of his hoof
He burst out of the bosom of ire,
Sharp as eyelight under thy frown,
Attila, my Attila.

Ravaged cities rolling smoke
Thick on cornfields dry and black
Wave his banners, bear his yoke.
Track the lightning, and you track
Attila. They moan: 'tis he!
Bleed: 'tis he. Beneath his foot
Leagues are deserts charred and mute,
Where he passed, there passed a sea!
Attila, my Attila!

The splendid and terrible description of the war horse, the Tartar horse, descending over the mountains into Europe, not frightened by things of flesh and bone, but like a thunder-cloud descending upon the cities below—reminds one of the description of Death in the Apocalypse—"I saw a pale horse; and he that sat upon him was called Death, and all hell followed after him." In the fifth century this scriptural text was not forgotten; Attila was often compared, with very good reason, to the rider of the pale horse. Where he conquered, there was nothing left; the ground became a desert, a waste of death, dry like the bed of a vanished sea. It is for another devastation, such another ride, that the warriors are clamouring at the wedding feast. But suddenly these men observe that Ildico never

smiles, that she is terribly white like a ghost, and they do not like this.

> "Who breathed on the king cold breath?"
> Said a voice amid the host—
> "He is Death that weds a ghost,
> Else a ghost that weds with Death?"

The barbarian idea of beauty is the red-faced, full-fleshed woman. They see no beauty in the fair, pale girl; she seems to them like a phantom. But Attila only laughs at the ominous exclamation; he knows that she is beautiful, and he orders her to fulfil her part of the wedding ceremony by pledging the guests in a cup of wine.

> Silent Ildico stood up.
> King and chief to pledge her well
> Shocked sword sword and cup on cup,
> Clamouring like a brazen bell.
> Silent stepped the queenly slave.
> Fair, by heaven! She was to meet
> On a midnight near a grave,
> Flapping wide the winding sheet.

The last three lines of course are ironical—they represent the criticism of the warriors. Perhaps one may have said, "How beautiful she is! How fair." "Fair"! observes another, "she might seem beautiful in a graveyard at night, wrapped in a white shroud!" To the speaker, such beauty as that is the beauty of the dead; there is something sinister about it. He is not all wrong; for in a little while the mightiest king in the world will die in the woman's arms. It is time for the bride to go to the bridal chamber; see how the women bow down to her as she passes by, not because they love her, but because she has become their queen!

> Death and she walked through the crowd,
> Out beyond the flush of light.
> Ceremonious women bowed,

Following her; 'twas middle night.
Attila remained . . . .

He remains, as the master of the feast, to speak a few last words to his faithful chiefs, but even while talking to them he feels impatient to visit his bride, not knowing that she is Death.

. . . . as a corse
Gathers vultures, in his brain
Images of her eyes and kiss
Plucked at the limbs that could remain
Loitering nigh the doors of bliss.
Make the bed for Attila!

A more terrible comparison could not have been used than this of the dead body attracting vultures. But the warriors want to talk to him a little longer; they want a promise of war; they want to feel sure that, after this wedding, the King will lead them again to battle. They want to capture and sack Rome. And one of them cries out to the King in Latin, "Lead us to Rome!" He answers, he pledges them in wine, he promises that they shall have Rome to sack and burn; and they are happy—they bid him farewell with roars of joy. In the morning he will lead them to Rome, that is enough.

In the morning what a tumult is in the camp, myriads and myriads of squadrons of cavalry, assembling for battle, chanting, cheering, roaring in the gladness of their expectation! But in the pavilion of Attila all is still silent. The chiefs know that their king is seldom late in rising; they are surprised that he does not appear. They make jests about the charm of his new bride, but they do not dare to call him, not for another hour, two hours, three hours, not until midday. At midday the chiefs lose patience, but still all is silent. At last, and only in the evening, after much calling in vain, they break in the door.

'Tis the room where thunder sleeps.
Frenzy, as a wave to shore
Surging, burst the silent door
And drew back to awful deeps,
Breath beaten out, foam-white. Anew
Howled and pressed the ghastly crew,
Like storm waters over rocks.
Attila, my Attila.
One long shaft of sunset red
Laid a finger in the bed—
Square along the couch and stark,
Like the sea-rejected thing,
Sea-sucked white, behold their king!
Attila, my Attila!

The King is dead! The warriors cannot believe it, do not want to believe. They see, and are struck with horror also because of the incalculable consequence of his death. But certainly he is dead. The red light of the setting sun illuminates his bloodless body lying in a pool of blood, for an artery burst. But what has become of Ildico—the wife?

Name us that,
Huddled in the corner dark,
Humped and grinning like a cat,
Teeth for lips!—'tis she! she stares,
Glittering through her bristling hairs.

There is something there, in a dark corner of the room—something crouching like an animal, like a terrified cat, showing its teeth, raising its back, as in the presence of an attacking dog. Is it an animal? It is a woman, with her hair hanging down loose over her face, a woman, laughing horribly, because she is mad. They can see her eyes and her teeth glittering through her long hair. Did she kill him? Some think she did; others know that she did not. Some wish to kill her; cooler heads have resolved to defend her.

"Rend her! Pierce her to the hilt
She is murder—have her out!"

"What!—this little fist, as big
As the southern summer fig!
She is madness, none may doubt."
"Death, who dares deny her guilt!"
"Death, who says his blood she spilt!"

. . . . . .

Each at each, a crouching beast,
Glared and quivered for the word.
Each at each, and all on that,
Humped and grinning like a cat.
Head bound with its bridal wreath.

. . . . . .

"Death, who dares deny her guilt!"
"Death, who says his blood she spilt!
Traitor he who stands between!"
"Swift to hell, who harms the Queen!"
She, the wild, contention's cause,
Combed her hair with quiet paws.
Make the bed for Attila!

Notice the horror of the effect caused by the use of certain simple words in these verses. The beautiful Ildico is no longer spoken of as a woman, but as an insane animal or a thing. First we notice that "it" and "its" have been substituted for "she" and "hers" or "her"; then we have the word "paws," making a very horrible impression. The woman is so mad that she knows nothing of her danger, knows nothing of what has happened; through some old habit of womanly instinct, she tries to arrange her poor tossed hair, but with her fingers, as a cat combs itself with its paws.

Then begins the mighty breaking of that tremendous army. First Attila must be buried; and, according to custom, no one must know where the King is buried. A party of slaves are ordered to make the grave; when they have made it, they are killed and buried, in order that none of them may be able to say to strangers where the corpse of Attila reposes. It is not impossible, it is even probable that Ildico was killed and buried with her king, for the bar-

barians were accustomed to slaughter the attendants of a dead prince, and even his horses, in order that he might have shadowy company and shadowy steeds in the other world. But we do not know. History has nothing to say as to what became of Ildico. The poem closes with a wonderful description of the breaking up of the army, which is likened to the breaking up of the ice in a great river at the approach of spring.

Lo, upon a silent hour,
When the pitch of frost subsides,
Danube with a shout of power
Loosens his imprisoned tides:
Wide around the frighted plains
Shake to hear the riven chains,
Dreadfuller than heaven in wrath:
As he makes himself a path:
High leaps the ice-cracks, towering pile
Floes to bergs, and giant peers
Wrestle on a drifted isle;
Island on ice island rears,
Dissolution battles fast;
Big the senseless Titans loom,
Through a mist of common doom
Striving which shall die the last;
Till a gentle-breathing morn
Frees the stream from bank to bank,
So the Empire built of scorn,
Agonized, dissolved, and sank.
Of the queen no more was told
Than of leaf on Danube rolled.
Make the bed for Attila!

I have said that this poem is emotional rather than didactic; yet there is a moral suggestion in it, the suggestion of what one foolish indulgence in lust may cause. For in the case of Attila, who had already scores and scores of wives, the marriage with Ildico was a mere piece of brutal indulgence and cruelty, and it proved his death. Then again, of course, it was a good thing for the world that

Attila died when he did. It would seem as if nature takes very good care that men who are only brutal and cunning shall not be allowed to rule human life for a great length of time. Their own passions or their own follies eventually destroy them.

There is yet another suggestion in the poem, which Meredith is very fond of making, both in his novels and in his verse. He thinks that an old man should never marry a young woman, no matter how great the merit of the old man may be. Here there will be many to disagree with Meredith, and to quote such cases as that of the great French engineer, De Lesseps, who married only when he was more than sixty years old, and thereafter raised a very numerous family of remarkably fine children. But in a general way, Meredith is probably right. He expounds his ideas very clearly in a little poem called "The Last Contention." In this "last contention" the poet addresses an old man who wants to marry a young girl. He represents the mind of the man as that of a captain, directing a ship, and the ship is the body, the constitution, the physical part of the individual. With this explanation we may quote a few verses of the poem. It is cruel; but it is very moral and perhaps very just.

Young captain of a crazy bark!
O tameless heart in battered frame!
Thy sailing orders have a mark,
  And hers is not the name.

For action all thine iron clanks
In cravings for a splendid prize;
Again to race or bump thy planks
  With any flag that flies.
  . . . . .
Admires thee Nature with much pride;
She clasps thee for a gift of morn,
Till thou art set against the tide,
  And then beware her scorn.
  . . . . .

This lady of the luting tongue,
The flash in darkness, billow's grace—
For thee the worship,—for the young
In muscle the embrace.

Soar on thy manhood clear for those
Whose toothless Winter claws at May,
And take her as the vein of rose
Athwart an evening grey.

I have left out the most cruel verses; but these are significant enough. The person addressed might be one of those old generals or admirals who figure so often in the novels of Meredith, some brave old man, with a great reputation for courage and skill and the arts of courtesy. Such men may be able to win a young wife, rather by help of their wealth, social position, and reputation than by real love. The poet says that one should not try to do this. And he says that the man who does it, or wishes to do it, is like a skilful captain who trusts too much to his seamanship, forgetting that his vessel is in a state of decay. The heart may be young enough, but that is not sufficient. Nature seems to love and favour grand old men, but not if they do what is not according to Nature's laws. Therefore if marriages between old and young prove to be unfortunate, the fault is in most cases with the old. The old man may admire, may reverence a beautiful young person; but only as we admire a work of art, at a distance, or beautiful colours in the sunset sky. Let me call your attention to the use of the phrases "flash in darkness" and "billow's grace." The Greeks said that life was like a flash between two darknesses—the darkness of the mystery out of which we come, and the darkness of the mystery into which we go. It is a very beautiful and a very profound comparison; the poet here uses it especially in reference to the beautiful period of youth, which is short. He suggests that an old man should have wisdom enough to think of youth and

of beauty as passing illusions. "Billow's grace" is a very striking simile. The charm of movement in a graceful person is something which no art can reproduce. It is beauty of motion, and the instant that the motion stops, the charm is not. The beauty of water, flowing water, is of this kind. Even while you admire the motion of a wave, gilded by the sunlight, the wave has passed.

And now we shall turn to a very important division of Meredith's poems—those dealing with the philosophy of life as a whole. On this subject most of the great English poets are apt to be a little didactic in the religious sense. Meredith is also didactic—but not in a religious sense. One peculiarity of his work is the total absence of theological doctrine of any kind. He talks to you about the laws of the universe, the laws of life, the laws of nature—never about the laws of any God or any religion. When he does mention the word God or the word religion, it is always in such a way that you feel he considers such things only as symbols—useful symbols, perhaps, but symbols only. I shall speak only of two remarkable poems of this kind. The first, called "The Woods of Westermain," considers especially the struggle of human life, and the duties of man in that struggle. The other poem, entitled "Earth and Man," treats more largely of the problem of the universe—the great mystery of the questions, Where do we come from? Why do we exist? Whither are we going? Let us first take the "Woods of Westermain."

Why the poem should be called by the name of "The Woods of Westermain," I am not able to tell you; but I think that the name contains a suggestion about occidental life as contrasted with oriental life. However, I am not sure, but, at all events, the subject of the poem is not a real forest, but the forest of human existence, the place in which the struggle of life goes on—therefore, in the true sense, Nature.

The great teaching of this poem is that Nature has given

us powers and senses not for pleasure, not for the obtaining of selfish enjoyment, but for battle. All that we know at present about the reason of life is summed up in that fact. The great natural duty of every man is to fight, morally and physically, and though he has a perfect right to enjoy himself, to seek pleasure at proper times and places, he must never allow pleasure to interfere with the supreme duty of struggle in battle; the first requisite, therefore, is courage, the first thing necessary is never to be afraid. In the ancient fairy-tales of Europe, we find many stories about enchanted forests, goblin forests. The knight, the hero of the story, enters a great wood, which seems very green and pleasant to the eye. As he lies down under a tree, however, he sees strange shapes looking at him—shapes of fairies, shapes of demons, shapes of giants. But he rides on, and they do not do him any harm. After a while he arrives safely at his destination. Quite otherwise in the case of the cowardly knight. When he finds himself in the forest he becomes afraid, and terrible shapes rise up about him, come close to him, at last attack him and tear him to pieces. Now the forest of life is just like the enchanted forest of the old fairy-tales. If you are afraid, you are destroyed. If you are not afraid, all is bright and beautiful.

Enter these enchanted woods,
  You who dare.
Nothing harms beneath the leaves,
More than waves a swimmer cleaves.
Toss your heart up with the lark,
Float at peace with mouse and worm,
  Fair you fare.
Only at a dread of dark
Quaver,—and they quit their form:
Thousand eyeballs under hoods
  Have you by the hair.
Enter these enchanted woods,
  You who dare.

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Here the snake across your path
Stretches in his golden bath;
Mossy-footed squirrels leap
Soft as winnowing plumes of sleep.

. . . . .

Each has business of his own;
But should you distrust a tone,
  Then beware!
Shudder all the haunted roods,
All the eyeballs under hoods
Shroud you in their glare.

I am not sure that this imagery can appeal to you as it was intended to appeal to the Western reader, because it partly depends for effect upon the knowledge of the old fairy-tale pictures. In Western ghost stories and fairy stories, goblins and other phantoms are usually represented in long robes with hoods over their faces, and very big, wicked eyes. That is why the poet speaks so often of the hoods and the eyeballs. The meaning is that, in this world, just so soon as you begin to suspect and to be afraid, everything really becomes to you terrible—even as in the old fairy-tales a tree was only a tree to the sight of a brave man, but to the cowardly man its roots became feet and its branches horrible arms and claws, and its crest a goblin face.

Then follows a wonderful description of wood life—the life of insect, reptile, bird and little animals—the poet taking care to show how each and all of these represent something of human life and moral truth. But it is one of the most difficult poems in English literature to read; and I shall not try to quote much from it. Enough to say that the same lesson is taught all the way through the poem, the lesson of what Nature means. She must not be thought of as a cruel Sphinx: she is cruel only if you imagine her to be cruel. Nature will always be what you think her to be. Think of her as beautiful and good; then she will be good and beautiful for you. Think of her as cruel; then

she will be cruel to you. Do not think of her as pleasure; if you do, she will give you pleasure, but she will destroy you at the same time. She is the spirit and law of Eternal Struggle; and it is thus only that you should think of her, as a divinity desiring you to be brave, active, generous, ambitious. Above all things, you must not hate. Hate nature, and you are instantly destroyed. You must not allow even a thought of hate to enter your mind.

Hate, the shadow of a grain,
You are lost in Westermain;
Earthward swoops a Vulture Sun
Nighted upon carrion:
Straightway venomed winecups shout
As to one whose eyes are out;
Flowers along the reeling floor
Drip henbaine and hellebore;
Beauty of her tresses shorn
Shrieks as nature's maniac;
Hideousness on hoof and horn
Tumbles, yapping in her track;
Haggard wisdom, stately once,
Leers fantastical and trips.

. . . . .

Imp that dances, imp that flits,
Imp o' the demon-growing girl,
Maddest! whirl with imp o' the pits
Round you, and with them you whirl
Fast, where pours the fountain rout
Out of him whose eyes are out!

The foregoing must seem to you very difficult verse; and it is really very difficult for the best English readers. But at the same time it is very powerful; and I think that you ought to have at least one example of the difficult side of Meredith. This is a picture—a horrible picture, such as old artists used to make in the fifteenth or sixteenth century to illustrate the temptations of a saint by devils, or the terrors of a sinner about to die, and surrounded by

ghastly visions. Really if you hate Nature, the universe will at once for you become what it seemed to the superstitious of the past ages and to the disordered fancies of insane fanatics. The very sun itself will no longer appear as a glorious star, but as a creature of prey, devouring the dead. Perhaps the poet here wishes also to teach us that we must not think too much about the ugly side of death as an appearance—the corruption, the worms, the darkness of the grave. To think about those things, as the monks of the Middle Ages did, is to hate Nature. Everything seems foul to the man whose imagination is foul. Everything which should be nourishing becomes poison, everything which should seem beautiful becomes hideous. The reference to "One whose eyes are out," is, you know, a reference to the old fashioned pictures of death, as a goblin skeleton, seeing without eyes. In some frightful pictures death was represented also as an eyeless corpse, out of which all kinds of goblins, demons, and bad dreams were swarming, like maggots. Of course such are the pictures referred to here by the poet. Believe in goblins and devils, and you will see them; believe that all men are wicked, and you will find them wicked; believe that Nature is evil, and Nature will certainly destroy you, just as the demons in the mediaeval story tore to pieces the magician who had not learned the secret of making them obey.

Very much more easy to understand are the stanzas upon "Earth and Man." These attempt to explain the real problem of man's existence. The poet represents the earth as a person, a mother, a nurse. But this mother, this nurse, this divine person is not able to do everything for man. She can give him life; she can feed him; but she cannot help him otherwise, except upon the strange condition that he helps himself. She makes him and embraces him, but that is all. Otherwise he must make his own future, his own happiness or misery.

For he is in the lists
Contentious with the elements, whose dower
First sprang him; for swift vultures to devour
If he desists.

His breath of instant thirst
Is warning of a creature matched with strife,
To meet it as a bride, or let fall life
On life's accursed.

That is, man in this world is like an athlete, or a warrior in the lists—in the place of contests. With what must he contend? First of all, he must contend with the very element of nature, with the very same forces which brought him into being, or as the poet says "sprang him." And if he hesitates to fight with those forces, then quickly the vultures of death seize upon him. The condition of his existence is struggle. Even the first cry of the child, the cry of thirst for the mother's milk, signifies that man is born to desire and to toil and to contend. He must either meet the duty of struggle as gladly as he would meet a bride, or he must acknowledge himself unfit to live, and cursed by his own mother, Nature. Nature is not to be thought of as a mother that pets her child and weeps over its small sorrows; no, she is a good mother, but very rough, and she loves only the child that fights and conquers.

She has no pity upon him except as he fights and wins. She cannot do certain things for him; she cannot develop his mind—he must do that for himself. She makes him do it by pain, by terror, by punishing him fearfully for his mistakes. By the consequence of mistakes only does she teach him. She urges him forward by hunger and by fear, but there is no mercy for him if he blunders. I want you to remember that the poet is not speaking of the separate individual man, but of mankind and of the history of the human race. According to modern science, man was at the beginning nothing more than an animal; he has become what

he is through knowledge of suffering, and the poet describes his sufferings in the beginning:

> By hunger sharply sped
> To grasp at weapons ere he learns their use,
> In each new ring he bears a giant's thews,
> An infant's head.
>
> And ever that old task
> Of reading what he is and whence he came,
> Whither to go, finds wilder letters flame
> Across her mask.

That is to say, man first is impelled by hunger to use weapons, in order to kill animals, and these weapons he at first must use very clumsily. You must understand the word "ring" to mean an age or cycle. The poet wishes to say that through many past ages in succession, man had the strength of a giant, but his brain, his mind, was feeble and foolish like that of a little child—not even a child in the common meaning of the word, for the poet uses the term "infant," signifying a child before it has yet learned how to speak. It is supposed that primitive man had no developed languages. But, as time goes on, man learns how to express thought by speech, and presently he begins to think about himself—to wonder what he is, where he came from, and where he is going. Then he invents religious theories to account for his origin. But the mystery always remains. There are ancient stories about a magical writing. When you looked at this writing, at first it seemed to be in one language, and to have one meaning, but when you looked at it a second time, the letters and the meaning had changed, and every succeeding time that you looked at it, again it changed. Like this magical writing is the mystery of Nature, of the Universe; so the poet represents Nature as wearing a mask upon which such ever-changing characters appear in letters of fire. No matter how much we learn or theorize, the infinite riddle cannot be read. And one

factor of this terrible riddle is Death. Death of all things most puzzles and terrifies man. He sometimes suspects that Nature herself is Death, and purely evil. He began by worshipping her through fear, but his worship did not change his destiny in the least.

> The thing that shudders most
> Within him is the burden of his cry,
> Seen of his dread, she is to his blank eye
> The eyeless ghost.
> . . . . . .
> Once worshipped Prime of Powers,
> She still was the implacable; as a beast
> She struck him down and dragged him from the feast,
> She crowned with flowers.
> . . . . . .
> He may entreat, aspire,
> He may despair, and she has never heed.
> She drinking his warm sweat will sooth his need,
> Not his desire.
>
> She prompts him to rejoice,
> Yet scares him on the threshold with the shroud.
> He deems her cherishing of her best-endowed
> A wanton's choice.

If man thought of the spirit of Nature as the cruel spirit of death and destruction, surely he had reason to do so in the time of his primitive ignorance. Pleasure seemed to him of Nature—offered to him by Nature, and yet to indulge it often brought upon him destruction. Joy seemed to him natural, yet whenever he most rejoiced, the shadow of death would appear somewhere near him. Always this Nature seemed to be putting out temptations to joy and pleasure, only as a bird hunter scatters food on the ground to attract birds into his snare. And again this Nature would never listen to man's prayer. He found out that by working hard he could obtain food enough to live upon; thus Nature

seemed to allow him the right of life, or as the poet says, "to sooth his need"; but never would she grant him his "desire," his prayer for supernatural help. When it came to the matter of help, he found out that he must help himself. But why was it, again, that the wicked and the cruel were permitted to succeed and to become prosperous, while the good and the gentle perished from the face of the earth? To ancient mankind this was indeed a most terrible problem, a problem which has not been perfectly solved even at this day. Was Nature a wanton—that is, a wicked woman, preferring the evil characters, the murderer, the thief, the robber, to the upright and just? Such was the question which millions of men must have asked themselves in the past. Evidently the poet does not think so; he calls the successful, "the best endowed." What does this mean? It means that the choice of Nature in her favours, however immoral that choice may seem to us, is really a choice of the best, according to her judgment. You may say, if you like, that these or those successful men are bad, that they have broken all moral rules, that they have sinned against all the ethics of society, that they are scoundrels who ought to be in prison. But Nature says, "No, those are my best children. You may not like them, and doubtless they are not good to your thinking, but they are very much more clever and much stronger than you. I want my children to be cunning and to be strong." Are we to suppose, therefore, that Nature wishes to cultivate only wicked cunning and brutal strength? No, but cunning and strength are the foundations upon which intellect and moral power are eventually built. It is like the statement of Herbert Spencer, that the first thing necessary for success in life is "to be a good animal." If you can be both a good animal and a moral and kind person, so much the better. But while the development is going on, the chances always are that Nature will favour the animal man at the expense of the moral man who has no strength and no

cleverness. For those who have neither strength nor cunning must disappear from the face of the earth. Nature does not want to help weakness; she prefers strong wickedness to helpless goodness. And if we reflect upon this, we shall find that the whole tendency is not to evil but to good. It is by considering the past history of man that we can learn how much he has gained through this cruel policy of nature.

> . . . Thereof he has found
> Firm roadway between lustfulness and pain;
> Has half transferred the battle to his brain,
> From bloody ground;
>
> He will not read her good,
> Or wise, but with the passion Self obscures;
> Through that old devil of the thousand lures,
> Through that dense hood:
>
> Through terror, through distrust,
> The greed to touch, to view, to have, to live;
> Through all that makes of him a sensitive
> Abhorring dust.

Which means that, if we will really think about the matter from an evolutional standpoint, we shall find that it has been through the destruction of the weak that mankind has become strong. At first he knew only desire, like an animal; his wants were only like those of an animal. But gradually nobler desires came to him, because they were forced upon him by his constant struggle against death. He learns that one must be able to control one's desire as well as to fight against other enemies. From the day man discovered that the greatest enemy was Self, he became a higher being, he was no longer a mere animal. When the poet speaks of him as "transferring the battle to his brain from bloody ground," he means that the struggle of existence today has become a battle of minds, instead of being,

as it used to be, a trial of mere physical strength. We must every one of us fight, but the fight is now intellectual. Notwithstanding this progress, we are still very stupid, for we try to explain the laws of the Universe according to our little feeble conceptions of moral law. Or, as the poet says, we insist on thinking about Nature "with the passion Self obscures"—with that selfishness in our hearts which judges everything to be bad that gives us pain. Until we can get rid of that selfishness, we shall never understand Nature.

Now the question is, shall we ever be able to understand Nature? I shall let the poet answer that question in his own way. It is an optimistic way, and it has the great merit of being quite different from anything else written upon the subject by any English poet.

> But that the senses still
> Usurp the station of their issue mind,
> He would have burst the chrysalis of the blind:
> As yet he will;
>
> As yet he will, she prays,
> Yet will when his distempered devil of Self,
> The glutton for her fruits, the wily elf
> In shifting rays;—
>
> That captain of the scorned,
> The coveter of life in soul and shell,
> The fratricide, the thief, the infidel,
> The hoofed and horned;—
>
> He singularly doomed,
> To what he execrates and writhes to shun—
> WHEN FIRE HAS PASSED HIM VAPOUR TO THE SUN,
> AND SUN RELUMED.

Here we might well imagine that we were listening to a Buddhist, not to an English poet, for the thought is altogether the thought of an Oriental philosopher, though it

happens also to be in accord with the philosophy of Western science. The lines which I put in capital letters seem to me the most remarkable and the most profound that any Western poet has yet written about the future of mankind. Let us loosely paraphrase the verses quoted:

The end to which the senses of man have been created is the making of Mind. If man were not blinded and deceived by his senses, he would know what Nature is, because the divine sight, perhaps the infinite vision, would be opened to him. But the time will come when he shall be able to know and to see.

What time?

The time when the selfishness of man shall have ceased, when he shall no longer think of life as given to him only for the pursuit of pleasure; when he shall have learned that he must not desire to live too much, and that the body is only the shell of the mind; when crime and cruelty shall have become impossible—when this world shall have come to an end.

But when the world shall have come to an end, will there still be man? Yes, in the poet's faith; for man is part of the eternal, and the destruction of the universe cannot affect his destiny. It is not, however, when this world shall have come to an end that man will know. The earth will go back to the sun, out of which it came, and the sun itself will burn out into ashes, and the universe will disappear, and there will thereafter be another universe, with other suns and worlds, and only then, after passing through the fires of the sun, perhaps of many suns, will man obtain the supreme knowledge. Never in this world can he become wise enough and good enough to be perfectly happy. But in some future universe, under the light of some sun not yet existing, he may become an almost perfect being.

It may seem strange to you to hear such a prediction from an English poet, though the thought of the poem is very ancient in Indian philosophy. Yet Meredith did not reach

this thought through the study of any oriental teaching. He obtained it from the evolutional philosophy of the present century, adding, indeed, a little fancy of his own, but nothing at all in antagonism to the opinions of science, so far as fact is concerned.

What is the teaching of science in regard to the future and the past of the present universe? It is that in the course of enormous periods of time this universe passes away into a nebulous condition, and out of that condition is reformed again. Mathematically it has been calculated that the forces regulating the universe must have in the past formed the same kind of universes millions of times, and will do the same thing in the future, millions of times. Every modern astronomer recognizes the studies upon which these calculations are based. It is certainly curious that when science tells us how the universe with its hundreds of millions of suns, and its trillions of worlds, regularly evolves and devolves alternately—it is curious, I repeat, that this science is telling us the very same thing that Indian philosophers were teaching thousands of years ago, before there was any science. They taught that all worlds appear and disappear by turns in the infinite void, and they compared these worlds to the shadows of the dream of a god. When the Supreme awakens from his sleep, then all the worlds disappear, because they were only the shapes of his dream.

Herbert Spencer would not go quite so far as that. But he would confirm Indian philosophy as to the apparition and disparition of the universes. There is another point upon which any Western man of science would also confirm the oriental teaching—that the essence of life does not cease and cannot cease with the destruction of our world. Only the form dies. The forces that make life cannot die; they are the same forces that spin the suns. Remember that I am not talking about a soul or a ghost or anything of that kind; I am saying only that it is quite scientific to believe that all the life which has been in this world will be again in some

future world, lighted by another sun. Meredith suggests perhaps more than this—only suggests. Take his poem, however, as it stands, and you will find it a very noble utterance of optimism, inspiring ideas astonishingly like the ideas of Eastern metaphysicians.

I am going to conclude this lecture upon Meredith with one more example of his philosophy of social life. It is a poem treating especially of the questions of love and marriage, and it shows us how he looks at matters which are much closer to us than problems about suns and souls and universes.

The name of the poem is "The Three Singers to Young Blood"—that is to say, the three voices of the world that speak to youth. In order to understand this composition rightly, you must first know that in Western countries generally and in England particularly, the most important action of a man's early life is marriage. A man's marriage is likely to decide, not only his future happiness or misery, but his social position, his success in his profession, his ultimate place even in politics, if he happens to enter the service of the state. I am speaking of marriage among the upper classes, the educated classes, the professional classes. Among the working people, the tradesmen and mechanics, most of whom marry quite young, marriage has not very much social significance. But among the moneyed classes it is all important, and a mistake in choosing a wife may ruin the whole career of the most gifted and clever man. This is what Meredith has in mind, when he speaks of the three voices that address youth. The first voice, simply the voice of healthy nature, urges the young man to seek happiness by making a home for himself. The second voice is that of society, of worldly wisdom and calculating selfishness. The third voice is the voice of reckless passion, caring nothing about consequences. Which of the three shall the young man listen to? Let us hear the first voice.

As the birds do, so do we,
Bill our mate, and choose our tree.
Swift to building work addressed,
Any straw will help a nest.
Mates are warm, and this is truth,
Glad the young that come of youth.
They have bloom in the blood and sap
Chilling at no thunder-clap.
Man and woman on the thorn,
Trust not Earth, and have her scorn.
They who in her lead confide,
Wither me if they spread not wide!
Look for aid to little things,
You will get them quick as wings,
Thick as feathers,—would you feed,
Take the leap that springs the need.

In other words, the advice of this first voice is, Do not be afraid. Choose your companion as the bird does; make a home for yourself; do not be afraid to try, simply because you have no money. Do not wait to become rich. If you know how to be contented with little, you will find that you can make a small home very easily. A wife makes life more comfortable, and the children of young parents are the strongest and the happiest. Such children are healthy, and they grow up brave and energetic. You must confide in Nature. Men and women who are afraid to trust to Nature, because they happen to be poor, lose all chance of ever finding real happiness. Nature turns from them in scorn. But those who trust to Nature—how they increase and multiply and prosper! Do not wait for somebody to help you. Watch for opportunities; and you will find them, quickly, and in multitude. If you want anything in this world, do not wait for it to come to you; spring for it, as the bird springs from the tree to seize its food.

There is nothing very bad about this advice, though it is opposed to the rules of social success. The majority of young people act pretty much in the way indicated, and it

is interesting to observe in this connection that both Mr. Galton and Mr. Spencer have declared that if it were required to act otherwise, the consequences would be very unfortunate for the nation. It is not from cautious and long delayed marriages that a nation multiplies; on the contrary, it is from improvident marriages by young people. Yet there is something to be said on the other side of the question. No doubt a great deal of unhappiness might be avoided if young men and women were somewhat less rash than they now are about entering into marriage.

But let us listen to the second voice. Each of the three speaks in exactly the same number of lines—sixteen.

> Contemplate the rutted road;
> Life is both a lure and goad.
> Each to hold in measure just,
> Trample appetite to dust.
> Mark the fool and wanton spin:
> Keep to harness as a skin.
> Ere you follow Nature's lead,
> Of her powers in you have heed;—
> Else, a shiverer, you will find
> You have challenged human kind.
> Mates are chosen market-wise;
> Coolest bargainer best buys.
> Leap not, nor let leap the heart;
> Trot your track, and drag your cart.
> So your end may be in wool,
> Honoured, and with manger full.

This is the voice of worldly wisdom, of hard selfishness, and, I am sorry to say, of cunning hypocrisy; but it sounds very sensible indeed, and thousands of very successful men act upon the principles here laid down. Let us paraphrase:

Take a good look at the road of life—see how rough it is! Understand that there are two opposite principles of life; there are things that attract to danger, and there are powers that compel a man to make the greatest effort of which his

strength is capable. Consider all pleasure as dangerous; if you want to be safe and sure, kill your passions, and master all your desires. Observe how hard foolish people and sensual people find life. Wrap yourself up in self-control, keep always on your guard against pleasure, keep on distrust as a suit of armour—no, rather as a skin, never to be taken off. Before you allow yourself to follow any natural impulse, remember how dangerous natural impulses are. Beware of Nature! Otherwise you will soon find out, with trembling, that the whole world is against you, that human experience is against you, that you have become an enemy of society. And as for a wife, remember that you should choose a wife exactly as you would buy a horse, or as you would make any business purchase. In business bargaining, it is the man who keeps his temper the longest and conceals his feelings the most cunningly, that gets the best article. Never allow an impulse to guide you. Never follow the guidance of your heart. Life is hard, make up your mind to go steadily forward and bear your burden, and if you will do this while you are young, you will become comfortably rich when you get old, and will have the respect of society and the enjoyment of everything good in this world.

I have said that this advice is very immoral, although it is in one way very sensible. I say that it is immoral only for this reason, that it tells people to act sensibly, not for the love of what is good and true, but merely for the sake of personal advantages. I cannot believe that a man is good who lives virtuously only because he finds virtue a profitable business. All this is pure selfishness, but there is no doubt that a great many successful men live and act exactly according to these principles. Now let us consider the third voice, the voice of mere passion, esthetic passion, which is especially strong with generous minds. It is not usually the dullard nor the hypocrite nor the egotist who goes to his ruin by following the impulses of such a passion as that here described. It is rather the man of the type of Byron, or still

more of the type of Shelley. It is against danger of this voice that the artist and the poet must especially be on guard.

O the rosy light! it fleets,
Dearer dying than all sweets.
That is life; it waves and goes;
Solely in cherished Rose
Palpitates—or else 'tis death.
Call it love with all thy breath.
Love! it lingers; Love! it nears;
Love! O Love! the Rose appears
Blushful, magic, reddening air.
Now the choice is on thee; dare!
Mortal seems the touch, but makes
Immortal the hand that takes.
Feel what sea within thee shames
Of its force all other claims,
Drowns them. Clasp! the world will be
Heavenly Rose to swelling sea!

This will need a good deal of explanation, though I am sure that you can feel the general meaning without any explanation. The poet is making a reference to the rose of the alchemist's dream—the strange old fairy-tale of the Rosicrucians. It was believed in the Middle Ages and even later, that an Elixir of Life might be formed by chemistry—that is to say, a magical drink that would make old men young again, or prolong life through hundreds of years. It was said that whenever this wonderful drink was made in a laboratory, there would appear in the liquid the ghostly image of a luminous Rose. It would take much too long to go into the history of this curious and very poetical fancy. Suffice to say that the poet here uses the symbol of the rose of the alchemist to signify life itself—the essence of youth, and the essence of passion and the worship of beauty. Now we can attempt to paraphrase:

How wondrous beauty is! How wondrous life and love! Yet quickly these must pass away. Of what worth is life

without love? Better to love and die quickly. The desire of the lover is, in its way, a desire for sacrifice; he is willing to give his life a thousand times over for the being he adores. He thinks that love is life, that there is nothing else worth existing for. His passion gives new and strange colour to all his thoughts, new intensity to all his senses; the world becomes more beautiful for him. Even as if the colour of the sunlight were changed, so do all things appear changed to the vision of the man who is then bewitched. But, even during the bewitchment, he is faintly conscious of duty, of right and wrong, of a voice within him warning against dangers. He knows, he fears, but he will not heed. He reasons against his conscience. Is not this attraction really divine? She is only a woman, yet merely to touch her hand gives a shock, as of something supernatural. Then the very strength of passion itself makes it seem more natural. The poet compares it to a sea—the tide of impulse could not be better described, because of its depth and force. And always the urging of this passion is "Take her! Do not care! That will be heaven for you!"

The last stanza has a strange splendour, as well as a strange power; reckless passion has never been more wonderfully described in sixteen lines. And to which of the three voices does the poet give preference? Not to any of them. He says that all of them are deficient in true wisdom. The first he calls "liquid"—meaning sweet, like the cry of a dove. But that does not mean that it is altogether commendable. The second voice he calls a "caw"—meaning that it is dismal and harsh, like the cry of a black crow. As for the last, he says only that it is "the cry that knows not law!" By this he means that which suffers no restraint, and which therefore is incomparably dangerous. Yet I suppose that it is better than the caw. What the poet thinks is that the three different voices united together, so that each makes harmony with the others, so that the good which

is in each could make accord—would be "music of the sun!"

> Hark to the three! Chimed they in one,
> Life were music of the sun.
> Liquid first; and then the caw;
> Then the cry that knows not law.

This utterance is not nearly so commonplace as we might think at first reading. There is a great deal of deep philosophy in it. Meredith means that all our impulses, all our passions, all our selfishness, and even our revolts against law, have their value in the eternal order of things. In a perfect man all these emotions and sentiments would still exist, but they would exist only in such form that they would beautifully counterbalance each other. But there is no such thing as human perfection, and the individual is therefore very likely to be dominated by selfishness if he acts cautiously, and dominated by passion when he acts without judgment.

I think I have quoted enough of Meredith to give you some notion of his particular quality. At all events I hope that you may become interested in him. He is especially the poet of scholars; the poet of men of culture. Only a man of culture can really like him—just as only a man long accustomed to good living can appreciate the best kinds of wine. Give fine wine to a poor man accustomed only to drink coarse spirits, and he will not care about it. So the common reader cannot care about Meredith. He is what we call a "test-poet"—your culture, your capacity to think and feel, is tested by your ability to like such a poet. The question, "Do you like Meredith?" is now in English and even in French literary circles, a test. But remember that Meredith has great faults. If he did not have, he would rank at the very top of the Victorian poets. But he has the fault of obscurity, like Browning, he often tortures language into the most amazing forms, and he is about the most difficult of all English poets to read. His early work is much

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better than his later in this respect. But the difficulty of Meredith is not only a difficulty of language. No one can understand him who does not also understand the philosophical thought of the second half of the nineteenth century. He is especially the poet of a particular time, and for that reason it is very much to be regretted that he is less clear than almost any literary artist of his period.

CHAPTER IX

GEORGE BORROW

You will probably find, in the course of your future reading, many references to the name of Borrow, not only in English, but in French and German books. Do not forget the correct spelling; for even so great an author as Prosper Mérimée spells it wrong, using an "a" instead of an "o." There are many Barrows in English literature, but there is only one Borrow worth remembering. He is very well worth remembering, being one of the most extraordinary Englishmen that ever lived. His life work is principally important as throwing light upon the manners, customs, and language of a mysterious people—the gipsies (or gypsies); and he studied this people in many different countries.

I doubt whether there are now any gipsies in Japan; and I suppose that the subject will be sufficiently new to interest you. There are many references to gipsies in English literature as far back as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; and if you have seen any of these references, in the old ballads for example, you probably took the term to mean some sort of wandering vagabond. Wandering vagabonds only, the gipsies were, to the knowledge of the Middle Ages, and almost to that of the eighteenth century. The first approach to a correct understanding of these people was the work of Borrow.

The exact date at which gipsies first appeared in Europe seems to be still a matter of conjecture; but it is certain that they were in Spain and other parts of Western Europe at a very early day. They were wandering people, without a religion, without any of the habits of civilization; people who spoke a peculiar language, and who lived chiefly by trickery and crime. Indeed, their name became at one time synony-

mous with crime of many kinds. They were a race of prey. They practised magic, fortune-telling, and all those arts by which the cunning are able to extort money from the simple. They were, also, in every country, excellent horse-dealers and great masters of the art of horsemanship. Another of their favourite occupations was black-smith work, and in later centuries they added to this trade that of tinsmith. Finally, as professional wrestlers, professional fighters, and in England professional boxers, they were unsurpassed, not so much on account of their strength, as on account of their marvellous agility. Probably the best boxer of the nineteenth century—he is still alive—was the English gipsy, Mace.

Dreaded everywhere and despised everywhere, these wandering people managed to subsist in all parts of Europe, notwithstanding the laws made in regard to them. They refused to live in houses, to submit to any discipline, or to remain in any one place for a great length of time. Curiously enough, the Inquisition left them alone. The Inquisition was looking after heresy; but people that had no religion at all, did not interfere with its plans, and as criminals the gipsies could be better managed by the civil authorities. Nevertheless the gipsies found it expedient to have among them as many fair haired people as possible, in order to lessen the risk of discovery by complexion; for they were a much darker people than Europeans. Accordingly they began at an early day the practice of stealing children and bringing up the stolen children as gipsies, so that the name of gipsy, even during the eighteenth century, became a word of terror to mothers, as the stolen child would not be brought back again.

With all their faults, however, this people had virtues of their own. They were true to each other, capable of extraordinary gratitude as well as of extraordinary revenge; and their women, often strangely beautiful, were recognized as faithful to their husbands. Gipsy women never became

prostitutes. Also the skill of the people in certain callings made them a great reputation, well deserved—in the breeding and raising of horses, for example. All over the world, even in the United States today, a great deal of the business of horse-raising and horse trading is managed by gipsies.

What we know about them now makes them more interesting than ever as subjects of study. They are not Europeans, but Oriental; they speak a language having a very close affinity with Hindustani; and they are almost certainly of Indian origin. The activity and dexterity of the men and the beauty of the women, are not European at all. Having been for many centuries social outlaws, they were obliged to associate a great deal with the criminal classes of great cities; and to these they taught something of their own language. The secret words today used by criminal classes in London, Paris or New York, are now known to be largely composed of gipsy words, which are Indian words that have become adopted into European slang.

As I have already said, the first general knowledge of the origin, habits, and customs of this extraordinary race was given to the world by Borrow. Borrow, from boyhood, seems to have been fascinated by them, and to have passed a great deal of his time in their company. He was not, however, either the first or the last man charmed by the gipsies. As early as the seventeenth century we have the record of an Oxford student running away from civilized life to become a gipsy—which forms the subject of Matthew Arnold's very beautiful poem "The Scholar-Gipsy." Some twenty years ago we had also an instance of an English nobleman marrying a gipsy girl with unfortunate results. Gipsies have been favourite figures also in many modern novels and romances. Charles Reade's "Terrible Temptation" is a good example. Indeed, English novels about gipsy life could be numbered by scores; I shall only mention that the prettiest English story on the subject is Le Fanu's "Bird of Passage," and that the best French story on the subject is

Prosper Mérimée's "Carmen," which has inspired a beautiful musical composition—the great opera of "Carmen" by Bizet. The author of the French romance acknowledges that he owes everything to Borrow.

Now we can turn to the life of Borrow himself, one of the strangest Englishmen that ever lived. He was born in 1803, the son of a captain in the army. His education was partly in Ireland, partly in Scotland, and partly in England, according to where his father's regiment happened to be stationed. In the intervals of his school studies he seems to have first made the acquaintances of the gipsies, and to have learned something of their language and habits. He wanted to be like them, free to wander where he pleased; perhaps he regretted that he had a fair complexion, for we hear that while at school he used to rub his face with walnut juice in order to look like a gipsy, for which his teacher rebuked him sometimes before all the class. In 1819 he left school to be apprenticed to a lawyer—not an occupation at all suited to a person who liked gipsies. He himself said of law that it was only "a talent for explaining the self-evident, illustrating the obvious, and expatiating on the commonplace." Instead of studying law, he studied languages in the office, and studied them upon an astonishing scale. In the poet Southey's correspondence we find mention of him as a young man who, although not yet eighteen, knew twelve languages—Welsh, Erse, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, Danish, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. Not satisfied with this acquisition, he began to study Oriental languages, and we find him regretting that he could find no good teacher of Chinese. Chinese he did not understand; but in 1835 we know that he had mastered some thirty languages, including not a few of the least known. Needless to say that he proved of no use to the law. He gave up the profession before reaching his majority, and disappeared. It is supposed that he then joined the gipsies. He is known to have travelled over all parts

of Europe; but he has left no record of his experiences in most of the countries which he visited. We next hear of him in Russia, in 1826; and we hear of him superintending the first translation of the English Bible into Manchutata. Returning to England in 1835 he published a book called "Targum"—translations in verse from thirty different languages. The English Bible society, delighted by his translation of the Bible into Tartar, commissioned him to act as their agent in Spain; and Borrow gladly undertook the work—not because he really cared very much either for the Bible Society or the Bible, but because he wanted to study the gipsies of Spain after a new fashion. He translated, or got translated, a good deal of the Bible into Gipsy; but this fact was nothing in comparison with the book which he produced on his return from Spain, entitled "The Zincali; or an Account of the Gipsies in Spain." It was not only a book of wonderful interest and value, by reason of the novelty of the subject; but it was itself quite a novelty as a mere piece of literary art. Everybody was delighted with it. But they were still more delighted with the book which he produced in 1843 called "The Bible in Spain." This was an account of his wanderings and adventures in Spain, during his work for the Bible Society; and it took the English public by storm. It was even mentioned in a speech made in the House of Lords. He next produced a book called "Lavengro," chiefly an account of his wanderings and friendships with gipsies during his youth in England. In 1857 he produced "The Romany Rye," a gipsy novel—afterwards dramatized for the English stage. In 1874 he published his "Romano Lavo-lif; or Word-book of the Gipsy-Language." In 1881 he died.

There is perhaps no other man so widely known as Borrow, about whose private life so little is known. Living in the strangest fashion in different parts of Europe, wandering from place to place with bands of gipsies, hiding himself under a multitude of disguises, he actually remained during

the greater part of his life invisible to society. We know very little about what he did or where he went until he was already past middle age. We have reason to believe that he very nearly lost his life on one or two occasions by arousing the suspicion of the gipsies, who imagined him to be a police spy. But everything about him, even the stories which he tells us of his adventures, must be considered uncertain. When at last he married a rich English widow, and was introduced by his admirers into good society, he could not stay in it. His gipsy life had rendered him unfit for any other. He could not sit still in a room for half an hour, could not obey conventions, could not endure those little kindly hypocrisies by which alone society is made endurable. He fled from London into the country, and there passed the last years of his life, ready to show kindness to any wandering unconventional persons, especially gipsies, but obstinately refusing to meet men of culture—authors, clergymen, gentlemen or ladies of any rank. The habits of his boyhood had shaped his whole life and changed his whole character. By blood only he remained an Englishman; in thought, habit and feeling he became altogether a gipsy.

Into English literature, Borrow brought a new element, a new quality of romantic narration. None of his books is, in the strictest sense of the word, either a novel or a romance; they are all romantic narrative of things really felt and seen. He did not attempt any complete framework of story; there is no beginning and no end; there is no order; there is no sequence. I do not know how to explain his method better than by telling you that most of his works resemble note-books. Nevertheless, these books have a charm and a quality absolutely original, and still command a great deal of admiration and attention, especially from the young. He perceived that the most ordinary incident of everyday life could be made interesting, and the most ordinary emotions and impressions obtained value by proper literary treatment; and out of almost nothing he was able

to produce volumes, half fiction, half truth, such as had never been produced before. It is somewhat of a puzzle to determine where the true thing ends and where the fiction begins; but the best critics are inclined to think that the fiction lies chiefly in the combination of incidents, and the truth in the incidents themselves. This theory allows us to feel a great deal of respect for the author. It is not a case like Defoe's, who wrote out of his imagination. Borrow wrote fact; but he combined the facts of different years and different places in such a manner as to give you an idea that they belong to a particular, brief period of experience. He has had no imitators worth mentioning, because the particular skill with which he constructed his books depended upon a genius of the most original kind. Perhaps no Englishman could successfully imitate him. But I observe that some of the finest modern French work—sketches of travel in particular—is being constructed upon lines remarkably similar to the method of Borrow. I do not think this is an imitation; it is rather a spontaneous creation of the same sort; and it is the work of men who, like Borrow, have passed their lives in wandering about the world.

CHAPTER X

NOTE UPON ROSSETTI'S PROSE

As we are now studying Rossetti's poetry in other hours, you may be interested in some discussion of the merits of his prose—for this is still, so far as the great public are concerned, almost an unknown topic. The best of the painters of his own school, and the most delicate poet of the Victorian period, Rossetti might also have become one of the greatest prose writers of the century if he had seriously turned to prose. But ill-health and other circumstances prevented him from doing much in this direction. What he did do, however, is so remarkable that it deserves to be very carefully studied. I do not refer to his critical essays. These are not very remarkable. I refer only to his stories; and his stories are great because they happen to have exactly the same kind of merit that distinguishes his poetry. They might be compared with the stories of Poe; and yet they are entirely different, with the difference distinguishing all Latin prose fiction from English fiction. But there is certainly no other story writer, except Poe, with whose work that of Rossetti can be at all classed. They are ghostly stories—one of them a fragment, the other complete. Only two—and the outline of the third. The fragment is not less worthy of attention because it happeens to be a fragment—like the poet's own "Bride's Prelude," or Coleridge's "Christabel," or Poe's "Silence." The trouble with all great fragments, and the proof of their greatness, is that we cannot imagine what the real ending would have been; and this puzzle only lends additional charm to the imaginative effect. Of the two consecutive stories, it is the fragment which has the greater merit.

The first story, called "Hand and Soul," has another in-

terest besides the interest of narrative. It contains the whole æsthetic creed of Rossetti's school of painting,—a little philosophy of art that is well worth studying. That is especially why I want to talk about it. The so-called Pre-Raphaelite school of English painting, whereof Rossetti was the recognized chief, were not altogether disciples of Ruskin. They did not believe that art must have a religious impulse in order to be great art; and they did not exactly support the antagonistic doctrine of "Art for Art's sake." They considered that absolute sincerity in one's own conception of the beautiful, and wide toleration of all æsthetic ideas, were axiomatic truths which it was necessary to accept without reserve. They had no detestation for any school of art; they practically banished prejudice from their little circle. I may add that they were not indifferent to Japanese art, even at a time when it found many enemies in London, and when the great Ruskin himself endeavoured to help the prejudice against it. In that very time Rossetti was making Japanese collections, and Burne-Jones and others were discovering new methods by the help of this Eastern art.

Now the story of "Hand and Soul" is, in a small way, a history of man's experience with Painting. It is supposed to be the story of a real picture. The picture is only the figure of a woman in a grey and green dress, very beautiful. But whoever looks at that picture for a minute or two, suddenly becomes afraid—afraid in exactly the same way that he would be on seeing a ghost. The picture could not have been painted from imagination; that figure must have been seen by somebody; and yet it could not have been a living woman! Then what could have been the real story of that picture? Did the artist see a ghost; or did he see something supernatural?

The answer to these questions is the following story. The artist who painted that picture, four hundred years ago, was a young Italian of immense genius, so passionately

devoted to his art that he lived for nothing else. At first he wished only to be the greatest painter of his time; and that he became without much difficulty. He painted only what he thought beautiful; and he painted beautiful faces that he saw passing by in the street, and beautiful sunsets that he saw from his window, and beautiful fancies that came into his mind. Everybody loved his pictures; and princes made him great gifts of money.

Then a sudden remorse came to this painter, who was at heart a religious man. He said to himself: "Here, God has given me the power to paint beautiful things; and I have been painting only those beautiful things which please the senses of men. Therefore I have been doing wrong. Henceforward I will paint only things which represent eternal truth, the things of Heaven."

After that he began to paint only religious and mystical pictures, and pictures which common people could not understand at all. The people no longer came to admire his work; the princes no longer paid him honour or brought him gifts; and he became as one forgotten in the world.

Moreover, he found himself losing his power as an artist. And then, to crown all his misfortunes, some of his most famous pictures were ruined one day by the extraordinary incident of a church fight; for two great Italian clans between whom a feud existed, happened to meet in the church porch, and a blow was struck and swords were drawn—and there was such killing that the blood of the fighters was splashed upon the paintings on the wall.

When all these things had happened, the artist despaired. He became weary of life, and thought of destroying himself. And while he was thus thinking, there suddenly entered his room, without any sound, the figure of a woman robed in green and grey; and she stood before him and looked into his eyes. And as she looked into his eyes, an awe came upon him such as he had never before known; and a great feeling of sadness also came with the awe. But

he could not speak, any more than a person in a dream, who wants to cry out, and cannot make a sound. But the woman spoke and said to him, "I am your own soul—that soul to whom you have done so much wrong. And I have been allowed to come to you in this form, only because you have never been of those men who make art merely to win money. To win fame, however, you did not scruple; and that was not altogether good, although it was not altogether bad. What was much worse was the pride which turned you away from me—religious pride. You wanted to do what God did not ask you to do—to work against your own soul, and to cast away your love of beauty. Into me God placed the desire of loveliness and the bliss of the charm of the world. Wherefore then should you strive against His work? And what pride impelled you to imagine that heaven needed the help of your art to teach men what is good? When did God say to you, Friend, let me lean upon you, or I shall fall down? No; it is by teaching men to seek and to love the beautiful things in this beautiful world that you make their hearts better within them—never by preaching to them with allegories that they cannot understand; and because you have done this, you have been punished. Be true to me, your own very soul; then you will do marvellous things. Now paint a picture of me, just as I am, so that you may know that your power of art is given back to you."

So the artist painted a picture of his own soul in the likeness of a woman clad in green and grey; and all who see that picture even today feel at once a great fear and a great charm, and find it hard to understand how mortal man could have painted it.

That is the story of "Hand and Soul"; and it teaches a great deal of everlasting truth. Assuredly the road to all artistic greatness is the road of sincerity—truth to one's own emotional sense of what is beautiful. And just to that degree in which the artist or poet allows himself to be made insincere, either by desire of wealth and fame, or by religious

scruples, just to that extent he must fail. I have only given a very slight outline of the tale; to give more might be to spoil your pleasure of reading it.

The second story will not seem to you quite so original as the first, though, to English minds, it probably seems stranger. It is a story of pre-existence. Now, a very curious fact is that this idea of pre-existence, expressed by Rossetti in many passages of his verse, as well as in his prose story, did not come to him from Eastern sources at all. He never cared for, and perhaps never read, any Oriental literature. His idea regarding re-birth and the memory of past lives belongs rather to certain strangely imaginative works of mediaeval literature, than to anything else. Even to himself they appeared novel—something dangerous to talk about. Unless you understand this, you will not be able to account for the curious thrill of terror that runs through "St. Agnes of Intercession." The writer writes as if he were afraid of his own thought.

The story begins with a little bit of autobiography, Rossetti telling about his thoughts as a child, when he played at his father's knee on winter evenings. Of course these memories did not appear as his own; but as those of the painter supposed to tell the story. As a child this painter was very fond of picture books. In the house there was one picture book containing a picture of a saint—St. Agnes—which pleased him in such a way that he could spend hours in contemplating it with delight. But he did not know why. He grew up, was educated, became a man and became a painter; and still he could not forget the charm of the picture that had pleased him when a child. One day a young English girl, a friend of his sister's, comes to the house on a visit. He is greatly startled on seeing her, because her face is exactly like the face of the saint in the picture book. He falls in love with her, and they are engaged to be married. But before that time he paints her portrait, and as her portrait happens to be the best

work of the kind that he ever did, he sends it to the Royal Academy to be put on exhibition. Critics greatly praise the picture, but one of them remarks that at Bologna in Italy there is a painting of St. Agnes that very much resembles it. Upon this he goes to Italy to find the picture, and does find it after a great deal of trouble. It is said to be the work of a certain Angiolieri, who lived some four hundred years ago. Every detail of the face proves to be exactly like that of the living face which he painted in London. Being greatly startled by this discovery, he examines the catalogue of paintings, which he bought at the door, in order to find out whether there is anything else said in it about the model from whom Angiolieri painted that St. Agnes. He cannot find any information about the model; but he finds out that in another part of the building there is a portrait of Angiolieri, painted by himself. I think you know that many famous artists have painted portraits of themselves. Greatly interested, he hurries to where the picture is hanging, and finds, to his amazement, that the portrait of Angiolieri is exactly like himself—the very image of him. Was it then possible that, four hundred years before, he himself might have been Angiolieri, and had painted that picture of St. Agnes?

A fever seizes upon him, one of those fevers only too common in Italy. While he is still under its influence, he dreams a dream. He is in a picture gallery; and on the wall he sees Angiolieri's painting hanging up; and there is a great crowd looking at it. In that crowd he sees his betrothed, leaning upon the arm of another man. Then he feels angrily jealous, and says to the strange man, tapping him on the shoulder, "Sir, I am engaged to that lady!" Then the man turns round; and as he turns round, his face proves to be the face of Angiolieri, and his dress is the costume of four hundred years ago, and he says, "She is not mine, good friend—but neither is she thine." As he speaks his face falls in, like the face of a dead man, and becomes the

face of a skull. From this dream we can guess the conclusion which the author intended.

On returning to England, when the painter attempted to speak of what he had seen and learned, his family believed him insane, and forbade him to speak on the subject any more. Also he was warned that should he speak of it to his betrothed, the marriage would be broken off. Accordingly, though he obeys, he is placed in a very unhappy position. All about him there is the oppression of a mystery involving two lives; and he cannot even try to solve it—cannot speak about it to the person whom it most directly concerns. . . . And here the fragment breaks.

If this admirable story had been finished, the result could not have been more impressive than is this sudden interruption. We know that Rossetti intended to make the betrothed girl also the victim of a mysterious destiny; but he did not intend, it appears, to elucidate the reason of the thing in detail. That would have indeed destroyed the shadowy charm of the recital. While the causes of things remain vague and mysterious, the pleasurable fear of the unknown remains with the reader. But if you try to account for everything, at once the illusion vanishes, and the art becomes dead. It seems to me that Rossetti has given in this unfinished tale a very fine suggestion of what use the old romances still are. It was by careful study of them, combined with his great knowledge of art, that he was able to produce, both in his poetry and in his prose, the exquisite charm of reality in unreality. Reading either, you have the sensation of actually seeing, touching, feeling, and yet you know that the whole thing is practically impossible. No art of romance can rise higher than this. And speaking of that soul-woman, whose portrait was painted in the former story, reminds me of an incident in Taine's wonderful book "De l'Intelligence," which is *á propos*. It is actually on record that a French artist had the following curious hallucination:

He was ill, from overwork perhaps, and opening his eyes after a feverish sleep, he saw a beautiful lady seated at his bedside, with one hand upon the bed cover, and he said to himself, "This is certainly an illusion caused by my nervous condition. But how beautiful an illusion it is! And how wonderfully luminous and delicate is that hand! If I dared only put my hand where it is, I wonder what would happen. Probably the whole thing would vanish at once, and I should lose the pleasure of looking at it."

Suddenly, as if answering his thought, a voice as clear as the voice of a bird said to him, "I am not a shadow; and you can take my hand and kiss it if you like." He did lift the lady's hand to his lips and felt it, and then he entered into conversation with her. The conversation continued until interrupted by the entrance of the doctor attending the patient. This is the record of an extraordinary case of double consciousness—the illusion and the reason working together in such harmony that neither in the slightest degree disturbed the other. Rossetti's figures, whether of the Middle Ages or of modern times, seem also like the results of a double consciousness. We can touch them and feel them, although they are ghosts.

As I said before, he might have been one of the greatest of romantic story tellers had he turned his attention in that direction and kept his health. No better proof of this could be asked for than the printed plans of several stories which he never had time to develop. He collected the material from the study of Old French and Old Italian poets chiefly; but that material, when thrown into the crucible of his imagination, assumed totally novel and strange forms. I may tell you the outline of one story by way of conclusion. It was a beautiful idea; and it is a great regret that it could not have been executed in the author's lifetime:

One day a king and his favourite knight, while hunting in a forest, visited the house of a woodcutter, or something of that kind, to ask for water—both being very thirsty.

The water was served to them by a young girl of such extraordinary beauty that both the king and the knight were greatly startled. The knight falls in love with the maid, and afterwards asks the king's leave to woo her. But when he comes to woo, he finds out that the maid has become enamoured of the king, whom she does not know to be the king. She says that, unless she can marry him she will never become a wife. The king therefore himself goes to her to plead for his friend. "I cannot marry you," he says, "because I am married already. But my friend, who loves you very much, is not married; and if you will wed him I shall make him a baron and confer upon him the gift of many castles."

The young girl to please the king accepts the knight; a grand wedding takes place at the king's castle; and the knight is made a great noble, and is gifted with many rich estates. Then the king makes this arrangement with the bride: "I will never visit you or allow you to visit me, because we love each other too much. But, once every year, when I go to hunt in the forest with your husband, you shall bring me a cup of water, just as on the first day, when we saw you."

After this the king saw her three times;—that is to say, in three successive years she greeted him with the cup of water when he went hunting. In the fourth year she died, leaving behind her a little daughter.

The sorrowing husband carefully brought up the little girl—or, at least caused her to be carefully brought up; but he never presented her to the king, or spoke of her, because the death of the mother was a subject too painful for either of them to talk about.

But when the girl was sixteen years old, she looked so exactly like her mother, that the father was startled by the resemblance. And he thought, "Tomorrow I shall present her to the king." And to his daughter he said, "Tomorrow I am going to hunt with the king. When we are on our

way home, we shall stop at a little cottage in the wood—the little cottage in which your mother used to live. Do you then wait in the cottage, and when the king comes, bring him a cup of water, just as your mother did."

So next day the king and his baron approached the cottage after their hunt; and the king was greatly astonished and moved by the apparition of a young girl offering him a cup of water—so strangely did she resemble the girl whom he had seen in the same place nearly twenty years before. And as he took the cup from her hand, his heart went out toward her, and he asked his companion, "Is this indeed the ghost of her?—or another dear vision?" But before the companion could make any answer—lo! another shadow stood between the king and the girl; and none could have said which was which, so exactly each beautiful face resembled the other—only the second apparition wore peasant clothes. And she that wore the clothes of a peasant girl kissed the king as he sat upon his horse, and disappeared. And the king immediately, on receiving that kiss and returning it, fell forward and died.

This is a vague, charming romance indeed, for some one to take up and develop. Of course the figure in the peasant clothes is the spirit of the mother of the girl. There are many pretty stories somewhat resembling this in the old Japanese story books, but none quite the same; and I venture to recommend anybody who understands the literary value of such things to attempt a modified version of Rossetti's outline in Japanese. Some things would, of course, have to be changed; but no small changes would in the least affect the charm of the story as a whole.

In conclusion, I may observe that the object of this little lecture has not been merely to interest you in the prose of Rossetti, but also to quicken your interest in the subject of romance in general. Remember that no matter how learned or how scientific the world may become, romance can never die. No greater mistake could be made by the

Japanese student than that of despising the romantic element in the literature of his own country. Recently I have been thinking very often that a great deal might be done toward the development of later literature by remodelling and reanimating the romance of the older centuries. I believe that many young writers think chiefly about the possibility of writing something entirely new. This is a great literary misfortune; for the writing of something entirely new is scarcely possible for any human being. The greatest Western writers have not become great by trying to write what is new, but by writing over again in a much better way, that which is old. Rossetti and Tennyson and scores of others made the world richer simply by going back to the literature of a thousand years ago, and giving it re-birth. Like everything else, even a good story must die and be reborn hundreds of times before it shows the highest possibilities of beauty. All literary history is a story of re-birth —periods of death and restful forgetfulness alternating with periods of resurrection and activity. In the domain of pure literature nobody need ever be troubled for want of a subject. He has only to look for something which has been dead for a very long time, and to give that body a new soul. In romance it would be absurd to think about despising a subject, because it is unscientific. Science has nothing to do with pure romance or poetry, though it may enrich both. These are emotional flowers; and what we can do for them is only to transplant and cultivate them, much as roses or chrysanthemums are cultivated. The original wild flower is very simple; but the clever gardener can develop the simple blossom into a marvellous compound apparition, displaying ten petals where the original could show but one. Now the same horticultural process can be carried out with any good story or poem or drama in Japan, just as readily as in any other country. The romantic has nothing to gain from the new learning except in the direction of pure art; the new learning, by enriching the language and enlarging the

imagination, makes it possible to express the ancient beauty in a new and much more beautiful way. Tennyson might be quoted in illustration. What is the difference between his two or three hundred lines of wondrous poetry entitled "The Passing of Arthur," and the earliest thirteenth or fourteenth century idea of the same mythical event? The facts in either case are the same. But the language and the imagery are a thousand times more forcible and more vivid in the Victorian poet. Indeed, progress in belles-lettres is almost altogether brought about by making old things conform to the imagination of succeeding generations; and poesy, like the human race, of which it represents the emotional spirit, must change its dress and the colour of its dress as the world also changes.

CHAPTER XI

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

WITHIN the past few years an author very little known previously has suddenly come into fresh prominence. During his life he published nothing of consequence; after his death his papers were collected, edited, and printed, but attracted scarcely any attention. Then, owing chiefly to the efforts of the poet Robert Browning, they were forced upon public attention in a new way, and now command our interest.

Beddoes was one of the most curious literary figures of the beginning of the century. He was born in 1803; and he came of literary stock, for his mother was a sister of Maria Edgeworth, the great novelist. His father was a physician. Beddoes studied at Oxford, but he hesitated for a long time over what profession he should follow. His inclinations were towards literature; but he became doubtful of his abilities in this direction, and finally decided to study medicine. He went to Germany, became strangely attached to the German customs, language and way of life, and never returned to England except for short visits. He became so German in all his ways, thoughts, and manner of address, that even his own friends were known to mistake him repeatedly for a German. And what was still more curious, he wrote German poetry with remarkable success.

The world really appeared to smile upon him; he obtained distinction after distinction, made multitudes of scholarly friends, could have obtained almost any position that he desired; and yet an utter disgust with life suddenly came upon him. Nothing could cure it, and even to this day the cause of it is not fully known. We only know that after having accidentally cut himself while performing an

autopsy on a dead body, he was a long time laid up with blood poisoning; and that during this sickness he determined to commit suicide. He cut himself in the right leg below the knee, probably intending to let himself bleed to death. But friends discovered what had happened, and he was nursed very carefully, and was watched to prevent him from making another attempt. It was, however, found necessary to cut off the leg—gangrene having supervened. Beddoes survived the amputation; but as soon as he was able to leave the hospital on crutches he went to a drug shop, and by virtue of his right as a physician, was able to buy a large quantity of the terrible South American poison called curare. Returning to the hospital he swallowed the drug. Next day he was found dead in bed, and beside him lay a very philosophical letter, bidding good-bye to his friends, but not dwelling at all upon his troubles or the cause of his suicide. Indeed, the letter read exactly like an ordinary letter on various matters of medical business. After his death, an examination of his papers revealed the fact that he had been doing, just to amuse himself, some very extraordinary literary work. The poet Robert Browning and other men became interested in these remains; and a few years ago, under the editorship of Edmund Gosse, they were published in two volumes.

These volumes give to Beddoes an almost unique place in nineteenth-century literature. His principal work is a drama called "Death's Jest-Book." As a dramatic composition it has many defects, but the lyrics scattered through it are of extraordinary original beauty; and a good deal of work of the same quality exists in other forms. When Beddoes is not beautiful, he is at least strikingly impressive; and he has excelled especially in poems of a cynical and terrible kind, in the grotesque and the grim. These terrible poems will always be curiosities; they will probably find a place as enduring as some of the work of Edgar Poe. But Beddoes' claims to a very high place in poetry rests

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rather upon verses of a particularly delicate and graceful kind. Two of these I think it will be well to quote; for it is at this very time that his work is coming into general notice, and a few of his stanzas should tell you more about him than a dozen pages of criticism.

It is generally agreed that the most beautiful of his lyrical pieces is that called "Dream-Pedlary."

If there were dreams to sell,
  What would you buy?
Some cost a passing bell,
  Some a light sigh
That shakes from life's fresh crown
Only a rose-leaf down.
If there were dreams to sell,
Merry and sad to tell,
And the crier rang the bell,
  What would you buy?

A cottage lone and still,
  With bowers nigh,
Shadowy, my woes to still
  Until I die;
Some pearl from Life's fresh crown
Fain would I shake me down.
Were dreams to have at will,
This would best heal my ill,
  This would I buy.

It is the charming philosophy of these verses, not less than their exquisiteness, that has made them famous. You must not understand the verses too literally. Let us rather assume dreams to be joys, delights that are called dreams only in the deep meaning that all pleasures are unstable, and therefore illusions, like visions in sleep. But illusions are very pleasant things in their way. Suppose we could buy them. We can buy a great many things if we are willing to pay the price. There are dreams which we can only buy at the cost of life; we must die before we can see them. But there are others that we can obtain much cheaper, just at

the cost of very little pain. The poet says that life left him with the wish only for a very quiet place to live in, apart from men and close to Nature, where he could dream until he died. He could not be perfectly happy even then. But it would "best heal" his pain if he could have only this wish. By the word "bowers" in the second line of the second stanza, you must understand, not the ancient meaning of the word, which is a lady's room, but the modern meaning, a shady place of rest under the leaves in summer time.

And how dainty is the following little love song, full of words that sparkle and shine.

How many times do I love thee, dear?
Tell me how many thoughts there be
In the atmosphere
Of a new-fallen year,—
Whose white and sable hours appear
The latest flake of Eternity.
So many times do I love thee, dear.

How many times do I love, again?
Tell me how many beads there are
In a silver chain
Of evening rain.
Unravelled from the tumbling main.
And threading the eye of a yellow star,—
So many times do I love again!

Eternity is here represented as showering or snowing days and years, as the "flake" beautifully suggests; and you can take "sable" or black hours in this imagery to represent the shadow of the white day, as a snowflake in falling bears its shadow with it. The second stanza is still more exquisite with its simile of silver beads for lines of falling rain. "Unravelled from the tumbling main" refers, of course, to the fact that the source of all rain is really the sea. Lines of rain passing across the light of a star or planet might very well remind a poet of the effect of thread passing through a needle-eye. You must notice that all these images are

strange and new, and this quality of strangeness infuses itself through the whole of the work of Beddoes. At present the appreciation of this poet is only beginning, but before long it is likely that you will often find him quoted from, and you will not regret the time given to this little notice of him.

CHAPTER XII

THE VICTORIAN SPASMODICS

Last term I promised you a lecture upon those two minor schools of Victorian poets respectively called the Spasmodic and the Pre-Raphaelite. We shall begin today a short lecture on the Spasmodic school, which you know even less about than about the other. Already I have told you that the sarcastic term of "Spasmodic" must not be taken literally, that it was unjust, and that the school, although having no great sustained force, did some good work and must not be despised. Some of the best examples of that work have found their way into the best collections of Victorian poems, which is proof positive that the school has merit. If it could not live—that was only because its keynote was strong emotion, and you can not keep up such a tone indefinitely. The school exhausted itself at an early day.

I am not quite sure of being able to define for you accurately by any list of names, the composition of that school. Many who did work for it can not be said to have belonged to it for more than a very short time. Without any doubt I should have to put Miss Barrett (Mrs. Browning) into that school, and yet she occasionally rose above it. I should have to put Owen Meredith into the same class, for example—and Owen Meredith nevertheless worked in an entirely different direction. Alexander Smith has been called one of the Spasmodics; but I can show you some of his work that is scarcely inferior to corresponding work of Tennyson's. And then there is James Thomson, the greatest of English pessimistic poets, the only man in English literature whom we can fairly compare with the Italian Giacomo Leopardi. I think you have heard of Leopardi as par-

ticularly famous among pessimistic poets; but I think that Thomson, in spite of his want of education, is much more remarkable for the force of his pessimism than the delicate Italian sufferer. Well, as I have said, Thomson has been called a Spasmodic; but there is a dignity and massive power in much of his work which cannot be called spasmodic at all. It would be truer to call it Miltonic.

In fact, we must consider that the appellation Spasmodic refers to the faults of the school. The meaning of the word "spasmodic" is, as I told you, excess of emotion wrought up to the point of morbidness or sickness. But this does not mean that emotion is to be condemned because it is too strong. On the contrary such emotionalism, in real life, indicates weakness, sickness, disease of the nerves, loss of will power. An emotion cannot be too strong for artistic use; see the tremendous and terrible display of passion in Shakespeare's plays, incomparably stronger than anything in the Spasmodic school of poetry. But such passions, when artistically expressed, come like sudden storms and as quickly pass; for they are the passions of powerful and healthy men and women. Not so in the case of sickly or mawkish feeling; that is long-drawn and wearisome like the crying of a fretful child, or like the complaining of a sick man whose nerves are out of order. In the case of a child crying for a good reason, we are all sorry, and we do our best to comfort the child; but if the child continues to cry long after the pain is over, we become tired, and think that it looks very ugly as it cries. And if the child persists in crying for another half hour, we suspect a malicious intention and become angry with the child. Now the Spasmodic poets make us angry in exactly the same way; they cry without reason. There is a temptation to do the same thing in the case of almost all young students who have the two gifts of poetical sensibility and imagination; when they begin to treat of a pathetic subject, they are very likely to become too pathetic. That is partly because they are young, and

have not yet had time to learn the literary secret that emotion must be compressed like air to serve an artistic object. You know that the more you can compress the air the more powerful it becomes, and in mechanics, compressed air is one of the great motive forces. Emotion in literature is, in exactly the same way, a motive force; but you must compress it to get the power. This the poets of the Spasmodic school refuse to do.

Nevertheless they obtained immediate, though brief, popularity—which encouraged them to cry still louder than before. But why? Simply because to persons of uncultured taste the higher zones of emotion are out of reach. Their nerves are somewhat dull; they are moved by very simple things, and would not be moved at all perhaps by great things. Everywhere there is a public of this kind, to whom lachrymose emotion and mawkish sentiment give the same kind of pleasure that black, red and blazing yellow give to the eyes of little children and savages. In England this public is particularly large. But after all, it is capable of learning, and it gets tired at last of what is not good, just as an intelligent child is able to learn, after a time, that certain colours are vulgar and others gentle. When the English public learned the faults of what they were admiring, they dropped the Spasmodics and forgot their beauties as well as their faults. But there are beauties which ought not to be forgotten; and some of these are to be found in the work of Sydney Dobell.

Sydney Dobell was the son of a wine merchant, and himself became a wine dealer, which he remained during the greater part of his life. He was well educated, and with a better conception of art might have done very good things. As it is, nobody can read the whole of his poetry without disliking him; it is too mawkish. This was not the result of bad training. It was the expression of a belief prevalent in certain literary circles of the time, that Tennyson and his followers were too cold, and that a more

emotional school of poetry was needed. The Pre-Raphaelite circle had the same opinion. The opinion was right. But while the Pre-Raphaelite went to work in the right direction to improve upon the methods of the earlier Romantics, the Spasmodics went to work in the wrong direction. They exaggerated pathos without perceiving that the more room given to it, the weaker it becomes. Nevertheless, before they failed they succeeded in giving a few beautiful things to English anthologies; and several of these are by Dobell.

Out of the mass of Dobell's work I think that there are really only three first class pieces, although the new Oxford anthology makes a different choice. I have no alternative but to exercise my own judgment; and I give the preference to the pieces entitled, "Tommy's Dead," "How's My Boy?" and the queer little ballad said to have inspired the refrain of Rossetti's wonderful "Sister Helen."

I shall first quote from "Tommy's Dead." This poem represents the grief of a father for the loss of his favourite son. The father is a farmer, a very old man, and weak in his mind. All the poem I shall not quote; it has the fault of being very much too long. But the best parts of it are powerful and striking.

> You may give over plough, boys,
> You may take the gear to the stead;
> All the sweat of your brow, boys,
> Will never get beer and bread.
> The seed's waste, I know, boys,
> There's not a blade will grow, boys,
> 'Tis cropped out, I trow, boys,
> And Tommy's dead.

So the poem opens. The old man is working in the field with his sons, and suddenly hearing the news of the death of his favourite, is filled with despair. It seems to him that life is not worth living, that it is quite useless to work any more, that everything is all wrong in the world. He

wants his sons to sell the spare horse; he thinks the cow will die; he wants the hired men and women paid off and sent away. Evidently he is becoming crazed. In the fourth stanza the fact appears without any question, for he begins to talk to the ghost of his long dead daughter whom he thinks he sees standing in the middle of the floor. Then visions come thick before him, and in the fifth section of the poem these visions are described in a manner not to be easily forgotten. All the strength of the poem is here:

> There's something not right, boys,
> But I think it's not in my head,
> I've kept my precious sight, boys,—
> The Lord be hallowed.
> Outside and in
> The ground is cold to my tread,
> The hills are wizen and thin,
> The sky is shrivelled and shred;
> The hedges down by the loan
> I can count them bone by bone,
> The leaves are open and spread;
> But I see the teeth of the land,
> And hands like a dead man's hand
> And the eyes of a dead man's head.
> There is nothing but cinders and sand,
> The rat and the mouse have fled,
> And the summer's empty and cold;
> O'er valley and wold
> Wherever I turn my head
> There's a mildew and a mould,
> The sun's going out overhead
> And I'm very old,
> And Tommy's dead!

The most powerful line in this quotation is about the "teeth of the land." One never forgets that after reading the poem. It is a scriptural idea; the old farmer remembers his Bible and the words of the old Hebrew prophets about the land that devours nations. Only, in his weakness and half madness these memories of the Bible take strange shapes

in his old brain and inspire horrible fancies. Now the land seems to him a vast skull, the corpse of something, noseless and eyeless and cheekless, showing its hideous teeth. Even the forms of the trees become skeletons to his fancy, and the branches are bones. Notice that the choice of words in these lines is very fine, and very successful in giving the weird impression desired. I refer particularly to the words "wizen" and "thin," as applied to the fancied appearance of the sky. And after this the poem goes on one, two, three, four, five and six weary stanzas, any one of which could be spared. If the poet had stopped at the part where I have stopped, the poem would have lost nothing. For nothing could be more pathetic, more weird, more terrible than the vision of the changed world to the eyes of the despairing father; and anything added thereafter can only weaken the force of what has gone before.

The same fault exists to a less degree in the piece entitled "How's My Boy?" The questioner is the mother, who has been made insane by the loss of her sailor son. She cannot understand that he is dead; whenever a ship comes into the harbour, she runs down to ask the sailors for her boy. Most of them know her, and answer her fitly and kindly; but one day a strange ship comes, and she happens to question a man who does not know her story.

"Ho, sailor of the sea!
How's my boy—my boy?"
"What's your boy's name, good wife,
And in what good ship sailed he?"
"My boy John —
He that went to sea—
What care I for the ship, sailor?
My boy's my boy to me.
You come back from the sea,
And not know my John?
I might as well have asked some landsman
Yonder down in the town.
There not an ass in all the parish
But he knows my John."

And she begins to reproach him in a loud voice for not knowing her son. "But, my good woman," he says, "how can I answer you unless you tell me the name of the ship"? After a long time she tells him that his ship was called *The Jolly Briton.* He tells her not to talk so loud—

"Speak low, woman! speak low!"
"And why should I speak low, sailor,
About my own boy John?
If I was loud as I am proud
I'd sing him over the town,
Why should I speak low, sailor?"
"That good ship went down."

"How's my boy, my boy?
What care I for the ship, sailor?
I was never aboard her.
Be she afloat or be she aground,
Sinking or swimming, I'll be bound
Her owners can afford her!
I say, How's my John?"
"Every man on board went down,
Every man aboard her."

"How's my boy, my boy?
What care I for the men, sailor?
I'm not their mother—
How's my boy, my boy?
Tell me of him and no other!
How's my boy, my boy?"

This is a strong feat, and deserves its place in an anthology. The power of it depends better upon the reading —you must know where to place the accents. If a skilful reader recites this piece, the pathos of it becomes almost terrible. Still, it might have been shortened with good effect; there are at least half a dozen superfluous lines and a number of useless repetitions. I shall not quote the ballad of "Keith of Ravelston"—you will find it in Palgrave's Anthology, if you wish to read it, and it falls a little short of being great. The quotations which I have given will

explain to you the method of Sydney Dobell. He generally takes a death bed scene or a tragedy of some kind, and heaps up the sorrow at wearisome length. What I have given you represents his very best.

But the best of Alexander Smith is much greater than this. Alexander Smith was at one time thought to be almost as great as Tennyson—which was a mistake. He was not a fortunate man, and became an author almost by accident. He was a pattern designer in Glasgow, where he composed his first poems, and these immediately attracted attention to him. Friends procured him the position of secretary to the University of Edinburgh, a position which he held until his death. He died quite young, of consumption. Perhaps his long painful illness prevented him from becoming great. Whatever harsh criticisms have been made upon the faults of Alexander Smith, I am quite sure of one thing,—that he actually wrote one poem well worthy to be compared with Tennyson's lyrical splendour. The subject of the poem is the city of Glasgow. Reading this superb composition, one cannot help strongly regretting the early death of the mind capable of composing it. It is an unforgettable poem; and it expresses the terrors and gloom and grandeur of a great manufacturing city better than any other poem in the English language.

Sing, poet, 'tis a merry world;
That cottage smoke is rolled and curled
  In sport, that every moss
Is happy, every inch of soil;—
Before me runs a road of toil
  With my grave cut across.
Sing, trailing showers and breezy downs,—
I know the tragic hearts of towns.

City! I am true son of thine;
Ne'er dwelt I where great mornings shine
  Around the bleating pens;
Ne'er by the rivulets I strayed,

And ne'er upon my childhood weighed
The silence of the glens.
Instead of shores where ocean beats,
I hear the ebb and flow of streets.

Black labour draws his weary waves,
Into their secret-moaning caves;
  But with the morning light
That sea again will overflow
With a long, weary sound of woe,
  Again to faint in night.
Wave am I in that sea of woes,
Which, night and morning, ebbs and flows.

This fine introduction promises well, and you will find that the promise is fulfilled. The poet intends to tell us about the sorrow and pain of city life, as experienced by himself. He does not know much about the country, but he speaks with mockery of the poet who talks about the beautiful smoke rising up from the cottage of poor country labourers, as if the labourers had nothing to do but to enjoy themselves—he laughs at the poets of Nature, who talk about birds and flowers and trees as supremely happy. For his knowledge of towns has taught him the law of life, which is Pain; and he knows that all living creatures must toil and suffer while they live. How very fine is that likening of his own life-path to a long road ending in a grave.

To him the life of a great city is like a sea,—a black sea of pain, in which every individual is but a wave. Every morning the tide of that sea rises, as the myriads go forth from their homes to toil; in the evening that tide ebbs, as the myriads return to their houses. This simile is very grand, but you can not understand how grand it is until you know the gloom and thunder and sorrow of a great Western city. You can not imagine it from anything that you have seen in Japan. Here, in our great city, all is light and sun, and there are trees in the streets, and gardens about the houses; and the country is so near you that you

can walk out to the fields any afternoon. But in a great manufacturing city like Glasgow, the streets are mountains of masonry, blackened with the smoke of factories, and between the cliffs of the gloomy houses the thronging of the life of the place is like the rushing of a river, with ceaseless rollings of thunder. In any great manufacturing town (above all, in London, the most awful city upon earth) there is a regular rising and falling of the roar of its life in the morning and in the evening, like the sound of a tide, indeed, when heard far away. So, as I said, I do not think that you can feel the great power of the third stanza, unless you have seen and felt what the poet had seen and felt. In a city like that, a man who thinks introspectingly cannot help feeling how very small he is, how very slight his relation to the monstrous existence of the city itself. He is only like one ripple in a mighty current, one wave in the tide of the sea. And in those dark cities the real joys of bright skies and green fields and blossoming trees are scarcely known, even to the rich. Of course there are green fields in the country, but the country is very far away; you can only go to it by railway when you happen to have a holiday, which is not often. There are things called gardens, but the walls about them are so high that the sunshine cannot reach the flowers there.

> I dwelt within a gloomy court,
> Wherein did never sunbeam sport,
> Yet there my heart was stirred,
> My very blood did dance and thrill,
> When on my narrow window-sill
> Spring lighted like a bird.
> Poor flowers! I watched them pine for weeks,
> With leaves as pale as human cheeks.

That is to say, as the cheeks of dwellers in such cities, who are proverbially pale. There is no exaggeration in this verse; it is actually true that the leaves of the trees in such city courts and gardens become unnaturally pale for want

of fresh air and sun. The verse relates to the poet's childhood. But later on he did have a short holiday in the country; he saw the sea and he saw the mountains, and the memory of that happy day remains with him all his life:

Afar, one summer I was borne;
Through golden vapours of the morn
  I heard the hills of sheep:
I trod with a wild ecstasy
The bright fringe of the living sea:
  And on a ruined keep
I sat and watched an endless plain
Blackened beneath the gloom of rain.

O, fair the lightly sprinkled waste
O'er which a laughing shower has raced!
  O fair the April shoots!
O, fair the woods on summer days,
While a blue hyacinthine haze
  Is dreaming round the roots!
In thee, O city! I discern
Another beauty, sad and stern.

The scenery described is near Glasgow, apparently—a mountain region by the sea, where sheep are herded, and where there is the ruin of an ancient castle. To ascend to the top of the tower and from there to watch a rain shower pass over the plain below, is a very delightful experience for a child. As for the word "hyacinth," I think you have noticed, in the time of spring vapours, that the shadows of the woods seem at a distance to look blue, and that the dark spaces between the trunks seem to be filled with deep-blue mists. The beauty of the expression "dreaming," I need not explain. Beautiful was this experience of mountain and of sea to the city-dweller. And yet he thinks that the city is beautiful too—though beautiful in another way, with a sad and terrible beauty. To understand some of the parts of what follow you should remember that Glasgow is one of the centres of the great ship-building industry.

Draw thy fierce streams of blinding ore,
Smite on a thousand anvils, roar
  Down to the harbour-bars;
Smoulder in smoky sunsets, flare
On rainy nights, with street and square
  Lie empty to the stars.
From terrace proud to alley base
I know thee as my mother's face.

When sunset bathes thee in its gold
In wreaths of bronze thy sides are rolled,
  Thy smoke is dusky fire;
And from the glory round thee poured
A sun-beam like an angel's sword
  Shivers upon a spire.
Thus have I watched thee, Terror! Dream!
While the blue Night crept up the stream.

The wild train plunges in the hills,
She shrieks across the midnight rills;
  Steams through the shifting glare,
The roar and flap of foundry fires
That shake with light the sleeping shires;
  And on the moorlands bare,
He sees afar a crown of light
Hung o'er thee in the hollow night.

At midnight when thy suburbs lie
As silent as a noonday sky,
  When larks with heat are mute,
I love to linger on thy bridge
All lonely as a mountain ridge,
  Disturbed but by my foot;
While the black lazy stream beneath
Steals from its far-off wilds of heath.

Have you ever noticed, in the neighbourhood of some great factory, the effect of sunlight upon the smoky air? I am not sure whether you can see anywhere in Japan what is described in these lines, to the same degree; but perhaps you have noticed that sunlight in smoky air, especially at

sunset time, takes colours of bronze and metals. The effect of sunset over a great smoky city like Glasgow is, at times, tremendous; the unnaturalness and grimness of the colours have indeed a particular splendour, but it is an infernal or awful splendour. In one of the stanzas notice the excellent use of the verb "flap" in describing the motion of great sheets of fire. The description of the light reflected skyward by a city at night you will be able to appreciate.

All these sights of the city at sunrise, at noon-day, at sunset, and at night, are dear to the city dweller, because they are a part of his every-day existence. Also he loves the sight of the harbour with its myriads of masts, thick as pines in a forest. I need not, however, quote all the poem to you—only the best part of it. Well, as we have seen, he finds some beauty in the city—a beauty that prevents him from regretting the country too much. But there was a time when he wished very, very much to go and live in the country. Not for his own sake alone, but especially for the sake of another person. He dreamed of a cottage near to the sea, somewhere upon the beautiful hills. But all that wishing is past; it was only a dream. He is going to tell us why:

Afar, the banner of the year
Unfurls; but dimly prisoned here,
  'Tis only when I greet
A dropt rose lying in my way,
A butterfly that flutters gay
  Athwart the noisy street,
I know the happy summer smiles,
Around thy suburbs, miles on miles.

'Twere neither paean now, nor dirge,
The flash and thunder of the surge
  On flat sands wide and bare:
No haunting joy or anguish dwells,
In the green light of sunny dells
  Or in the starry air.

Alike to me the desert flower,
The rainbow laughing o'er the shower.

While o'er thy walls the darkness sails,
I lean against the churchyard rails;
  Up in the midnight towers
The belfried spire, the street is dead,
I hear in silence overhead
  The clang of iron hours:
It moves me not,—I know her tomb
Is yonder in the shapeless gloom.

There is the real secret of his love for the city; the tomb of the woman to whom he had been betrothed is in the heart of it. For her it was that he, in other days, had longed for the sea, the bright woods, the windy hills. But now what does he care for the sea or the flowers? Alone, what happiness could the country give him? Please observe the great force and beauty of those three lines describing the bursting of waves upon a beach. The word "paean," I think you know, meant a Greek hymn of joy or thanksgiving. What the poet means is that there are two aspects of the splendour of the sea, one joyous, the other melancholy, but that neither of these aspects could any longer interest him. All the memories and joys and pains of his life attach him to the city, and it is now, for these reasons, the only deep pleasure in the world. He thus addresses it:

All raptures of this mortal breath,
Solemnities of life and death,
  Dwell in thy noise alone:
Of me thou hast become a part—
Some kindred with my human heart
  Lives in thy streets of stone:
For we have been familiar more
Than galley-slave and weary oar.

The beech is dipt in wine; the shower
Is burnished; on the swinging flower

The latest bee doth sit;
The low sun stares through dust of gold,
And o'er the darkening heath and wold
The large ghost-moth doth flit.
In every orchard Autumn stands,
With apples in his golden hands.

But all the sights and sounds are strange;
Then wherefore from thee should I range?
Thou hast my kith and kin;
My childhood, youth and manhood brave,
Thou hast that unforgotten grave
Within the central din.
A sacredness of love and death
Dwells in thy noise and smoky breath.

No man has ever more deeply expressed the emotion of love for his native city. A few expressions may need explanation—for example, the term "galley-slave." You know that ancient ships were moved not only with sails but with oars—indeed, up to the seventeenth century such oar ships were still in use. The Northern race, better seamen, discarded them at a much earlier date. The Greeks and Romans were first to use them on a large scale in war, and ships of war moved with oars were called war-galleys. Afterwards, in more modern times, as free men could not be readily induced to row such great ships, criminals were employed for such work—considered the most terrible work which a man could be obliged to do. Men were condemned to "the galleys" just as they are now condemned to prison for life. Thus "galley-slave" passed into colloquial speech as a symbolic term for anybody obliged to work very hard every day at the same thing, without hope of respite. In modern English stories, even of the present time, we often find clerks who are obliged to work very hard calling themselves galley-slaves. And here the poet speaks of his city as a galley, in which he is obliged to row very hard every day; but it is his home, and in spite of the hard work he

loves it so much that he can not bear to think of going away from it.

The second of the three stanzas above quoted begins with a rather difficult line, "The beech is dipt in wine." You must understand this to mean, "The beech tree, standing in the rich yellow light of the autumn sun, looks as if it had been dipt in yellow wine." "The shower is burnished" means simply, "The rain, as it falls against the sunset light, glitters like a shower of gold." These are the only difficulties. Perhaps you have never seen the word "ghost-moth" in English before. I believe that several kinds of insects are called by this name; but I imagine that the poet refers to what is more usually called "the death's-head moth"—that is, the skull-moth, because on the back of the creature there is distinctly marked the form of a skull. It is a large moth, and has the curious habit of stealing honey from bees. There are several curious superstitions connected with it. The poet mentions it merely because it is particularly an autumn insect. What he means to say is that now in the country all things are particularly beautiful to see. It is harvest time; the fields are full of ripe grain, the orchards are full of fruits, the hives are full of honey, and the honey-stealing moth has begun to fly abroad. I believe that this is the best example I could give you of Alexander Smith. All his work is not to be judged by the excellence of this single example; but it exemplifies the best of his powers, so prematurely numbed by death.

I shall now turn to the work of Arthur O'Shaughnessy, who but partly belongs to the group. He is not always a Spasmodic, but he is always a Rhapsodist, and this is the best time and place in which to quote from him. He was, during most of his life, a clerk in the British Museum—at first only an assistant librarian, later an assistant in the department of natural history. Like all the members of this school he was nervous, sensitive, sickly, and to a great extent unhappy. He sang of his own pains, mostly; and

like James Thomson, he sang best when he was most unhappy. I need not quote his best piece, "The Silences," because I had occasion to cite it in another lecture. I am going to give quotations from here and there, which will show you the original and rather strange beauty of his verse. Of other examples you will find a large number in Palgrave's Anthology.

The influence of Swinburne is especially noticeable in O'Shaughnessy, as it is noticeable in the work of Lord De Tabley; but O'Shaughnessy, like De Tabley, did not merely imitate Swinburne. He only felt him, absorbing something of his lyrical splendour and triumph to express it in new forms of verse. He was not so much a scholar as Lord De Tabley, but he had more original imagination, and could produce remarkable effects by very simple touches. Also, there can be no question as to the beauty of his melody; he had the "musical ear." Here is an example of his style, the first stanza of the poem entitled "Love's Eternity":

> My body was part of the sun and the dew,
> Not a trace of my death to me clave;
> There was scarce a man left on the earth whom I knew,
> And another was laid in my grave.
> I was changed and in Heaven,—the great sea of blue
> Had long washed my soul pure in its wave.

The last two lines are surely very fine; translate them into Japanese, and the beauty will remain untouched. This is poetry that will bear any translation, even translation into prose, which is a very severe test. The poem goes on to describe an imaginary meeting in heaven with the woman that was vainly loved on earth. She explains all the sorrow of the past to him, and eternal happiness comes to both. Very much the same idea is expressed in another poem called "Greater Memory," but the art takes a different form, and the merit is even higher:

In the heart there lay buried for years
Love's story of passion and tears;
  Of the heaven that two had begun,
  And the horror that tore them apart,
When one was love's slayer, but one
Made a grave for the love in his heart.

The long years passed weary and lone,
And it lay there and changed there unknown;
  Then one day from its innermost place,
  In the shamed and the ruined love's stead,
Love arose with a glorified face,
Like an angel that comes from the dead.

The burial signifies here the real fact of death, so we must not take the heart to mean merely the heart of the flesh; it signifies here rather the mind. The man has died, but ages after, awakening into another life he remembers the woman he vainly loved, and meets her again, and forgets all the sorrow.

It was knowledge of all that had been
In the thought, in the soul unseen;
  'Twas the word which the lips could not say
  To redeem and recover the past;
It was more than was taken away
Which the heart got back at the last.

The passion that lost its spell,
The rose that died where it fell,
  The look that was looked in vain,
  The prayer that seemed lost evermore,
They were found in the heart again,
With all that the heart would restore.

There is perhaps an echo of Browning here, from the magnificent verse of "Abt Vogler":

The high that proved too high,
The heroics for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground,
To lose itself in the sky,

Are music sent up to God
By the lover and the bard:
Enough that he heard it once—
We shall hear it by and by.

But although O'Shaughnessy may have been inspired by these lines of Browning, there is an original soft weirdness about his own presentation of the idea which lifts him far above the plane of the mere imitator.

The greater part of his poetry is love poetry and poetry of regret. But he also has inspiration for other motives—a constant longing for tropical life, a vain desire to visit the land of eternal summer. Perhaps it is especially in the gloom of London and the black damp of November fogs that a poet dreams of azure islands and impossible forests of palm trees. He has several poems of a remarkable kind upon these subjects. The best is the poem on palms, from which I may quote a stanza or two:

Mighty, luminous and calm,
Is the country of the palm,
Crowned with sunset and sunrise,
Under blue unbroken skies.
Waving from green zone to zone,
Over wonders of its own;
Trackless, untraversed, unknown,
Changeless through the centuries.

. . . . . .

Long red reaches of the cane,
Yellow winding water-lane,
Verdant isle and amber river,
Lisp and murmur back again,
And ripe underworlds deliver
Rapturous souls of perfume, hurled
Up to where green oceans quiver
In the wide leaves' restless world.

Many thousand years have been
And the sun alone hath seen,

Like a high and radiant ocean
All the fair palm world in ocean:
But the crimson bird hath fed
With its mate of equal red,
And the flower in soft explosion
With the flower hath been wed.

This is music and colour indeed, and most picturesque fancy. The last two lines of the quotation have been justly admired by naturalists for the exquisite use of the phrase "soft explosion" to describe the ripening and bursting of the male flower scattering its fertilizing dust upon the beautiful blossom. But I must warn you that the rest of the description is all fairyland. O'Shaughnessy never saw the tropics, and there does not exist in the tropical zone any such world of palms as he describes. Palms have to struggle very hard for existence against a thousand other kinds of tree in the vast forests of the tropics. Sometimes we may find in the midst of the forest a successful colony of palms, and they are then worth seeing, for in order to reach the sun at all they must lift their heads more than two hundred feet through the dense vegetation. A world of palms, a whole forest of wild palm trees, is an utter impossibility; every palm tree must fight very hard for a chance to live at all. You can find woods of palm trees in some parts of the tropics, but they have been made by man, not by nature. The excellence of the poem is not in describing what is true, but only in describing the beautiful imagination of the writer.

One more of O'Shaughnessy's poems deserves attention in the course of this lecture, the piece entitled "The Fountain of Tears." It is in one way, indeed, a typical poem of this school; it pushes the emotion to the extreme of rhapsody. But it has sweet music, and the fancy is so uniquely expressed as to give it a peculiar imaginative charm. I need not quote any of the verses to you, because you will find the poem in the second series of Palgrave's Anthology. The

fancy is that of a spring, in some retired place, made by all the tears of mankind. I think you know that this imagination is by no means new. In many mythologies there is mentioned such a river or lake of tears. The Breton fishermen have a proverb that the tears of women made the sea salt. In Japanese folklore also you have the river of tears. There is poetry in all these fancies, true poetry; they oblige us to reflect for a moment on the mass of human suffering. As I said, the fancy is not new, but I doubt whether it will ever become commonplace. In O'Shaughnessy's poem, the spring of tears at first appears to well up very gently and softly, with a music in its flowing that brings a strange kind of consolation to the hearer. But gradually the stream becomes strong, the ripples change to waves, the waves to billowings, and at last the flowing threatens to drown the world. So the imagination is carried almost to the edge of the grotesque. It is one of those compositions which come very close to the merely nonsensical, and yet remain beautiful in a certain way. One test of the value of a poem of this kind is the depth of the impression that it makes on the memory. Now, whoever reads this piece will never forget it, whether he likes it or not; and that is tolerably good proof that it is above the common.

Here I may close the subject of the Spasmodic poets. I have tried to show you that some of them produced beautiful things; and I think they have been somewhat unjustly judged. You must remember that these men, fighting for the expression of sincere emotion in literature, were themselves nearly all weak men, sick men, unhappy men; and many of their mistakes must have been due to nervous conditions. All the more do they deserve credit for having been able to add something to the treasure-house of English poetry, especially something of a new kind.

Do not, at the same time, forget that their principal weakness constitutes a literary object lesson. To dwell

upon an emotion at an unnecessary length is always dangerous. Sustained feeling is not at all likely to be powerful. The most powerful emotional poems are not those in which the sentiment is expressed in many stanzas or in many lines. I want now to give you, in contrast to the work of the real Spasmodics, one example of what I call a powerful poem. I do not know who wrote it; neither does anybody else. I found it the other day in the recent Oxford Anthology. It is a religious poem, a prayer. You know that I have not much liking for religious poetry in general, and little sympathy with most forms of religious emotion. Nevertheless I do not hesitate to say that I think this one of the strongest poems of an emotional kind that I have ever seen. It is simply entitled "Non Nobis,"—words taken from the old Latin version of the first verse of the hundred and fifteenth psalm, commencing "Not unto us, O Lord."

Not unto us, O Lord,
Not unto us the rapture of the day,
The peace of night, or Love's divine surprise,
High heart, high speech, high deeds 'mid honouring eyes;
For at Thy Word
All these are taken away.

Not unto us, O Lord:
To us thou givest the scorn, the scourge, the scar,
The ache of life, the loneliness of death,
The insufferable sufficiency of breath;
And with Thy sword
Thou piercest very far.

Not unto us, O Lord:
Nay, Lord, but unto her be all things given—
My light and life and earth and sky be blasted—
But let not all that wealth of love be wasted:
Let Hell afford
The pavement of her Heaven!

"This is only a Christian prayer," perhaps you were

beginning to think—"there is nothing remarkable in it—except the fine, strong, sonorous verse." But the surprise comes with the third stanza. This sudden focussing of religious emotion upon the object of human love seems to me one of the noblest and strongest poetical efforts that I have ever read. Observe, also, that the character of this love is not otherwise indicated than by its intensity. Is it the mother, the sister, or the wife, of whom he is thinking? We do not know; we cannot even guess. All we hear is the passionate expression of love for the woman who believes the man to be better than he really is. He knows himself not good, knows he deserves no favour, no mercy from Heaven. There is but one thing that he feels not afraid to pray for. He dares not pray for himself, but this mother, or wife, or sister who loves him—how horrible would it be that she should find at some future time all her love lost, wasted upon an unworthy object! Therefore—and only therefore—he prays that "Hell may afford the pavement of her Heaven"—that is to say, that what should be in Hell might at least be spared to form the pavement of that Heaven upon which the feet of the woman he loved must tread. Every time you read that poem over, the stronger it becomes. How different is this from merely sentimental and mawkish poetry! This is power.

CHAPTER XIII

THE POETRY OF LORD DE TABLEY

Our last lecture was about a poet difficult of appreciation by the common reader, and our present lecture will treat of another poet of the rare class—very different indeed from Bridges, but in some respect more exquisite; indeed, he is one of the most exquisite poets even of a period which included Tennyson and Rossetti. Perhaps some of you have not even heard of his name; I confess that he is not widely known, except to men of letters. But that is because he is too exquisite for the general reader. As for his real position in poetry, it will be enough to observe that Tennyson, who was very economical about his admiration, greatly admired this man; and in some respects De Tabley's work is really equal to some of Tennyson's work. Perhaps you will think that we are taking up rather difficult poets. This is true; but it seems to me important that the highest poetry, no matter how little generally known, should be somewhat more than known to university students. A word about the poet himself, who commonly wrote during his lifetime under the name of Lancaster. His real name was John Byrne Leicester Warren, Lord De Tabley; and he was the last of an illustrious and aristocratic race. He was born in 1835 and died in 1895—not quite six years ago. He was an Oxford man, and a distinguished scholar, not only in one but in a multitude of directions. He was also distinguished as a numismatist, as a book-collector, as a student of classical antiquities, and as a botanist. But he was one of the shyest men who ever lived, sometimes disappearing altogether for many years at a time. In later life it was said of him that he had only two friends, and that he had not seen one of them for five years nor the other for six years. This

was perhaps partly due to a remarkably sensitive organization; but I have an idea that the sensitiveness must have been greatly aggravated by life at English public schools. A sensitive boy is certain to be made extremely unhappy at an English public school, and the unhappiness may often be of a kind that poisons life. The misfortunes of Shelley and other distinguished men have no doubt been partly due to the treatment they received in public schools. There are exceptions, of course, as in the case of a sensitive boy who happens to be uncommonly strong and uncommonly aggressive. Some day, when it is sensibly recognized that a boy having a delicate and artistic temperament ought not to be subjected to the brutality of English public schools, fewer lives will be spoiled.

Lord De Tabley's peculiar character, however, must have been in part hereditary; his delicacy was the rare delicacy we find in members of old princely families that are becoming extinct. No better illustration of his capacity for affection need be mentioned than the fact that when a college friend of his was accidentally killed, many years passed before he recovered from the grief of this misfortune; and even late in life, he could not bear to hear the name of his dead friend mentioned, it caused him too much pain. To such a nature, the least unkind word or look, the least vulgarity or egotism of manner, necessarily gave great pain. He could not mingle with men without hurt; and therefore he eventually resigned himself to doing without them, locking himself up with his books, his statues, his rare coins, and his botanical specimens. He was the friend of nearly all the great poets and thinkers of the time; but he saw them only at long intervals.

Of course a man who thus shut out the nineteenth century could not very well reflect it in his work. Lord De Tabley, although one of the latest and most exquisite poets of the century, did not belong to it in feeling. He seems to have inherited an intense love for the artistic principles of the

classic age. He did not indeed care for classical form, as the school of Pope understood it; he did not write much in the heroic couplet. On the contrary he liked better, infinitely better, the Elizabethan form and the later romantic form; and the poet who of all poets most influenced him, even while shocking him, was Swinburne. What I mean by his affinity to eighteenth century poetry is the importance which he attaches to the form of the rhymes, to the melody of the verse, quite irrespective of subject and feeling. The modern high art in poetry makes the form the secondary, not the primary, consideration. In the eighteenth century the rule was exactly the opposite; and Lord De Tabley observed that rule. Since he was in all his heart and soul a true poet, the result was beautiful; for we find the thought as exquisite as the verse in the best of his work. You must not expect, however, much original thought from Lord De Tabley; he was not a great thinker. His originality lies in the musical colour of his verse, and in a certain delightful tenderness and vividness in his expression of emotion or of feeling for Nature. Where he sometimes equalled Tennyson was in the description of natural scenery and animal life.

I must also tell you that not all of De Tabley's poetry is excellent. A great deal of what he wrote in early life, both dramatic and narrative, is worth nothing at all. He acknowledged the fact himself. For many years after, he actually gave up all hope of being a poet, and returned to the art only in the evening of his career. But the little volume published only two or three years before his death, under the simple title of "Poems," represents the essence of all that was best in him. It is wonderful work. I believe that his failure as a poet in early life was principally due to his natural timidity—his instinctive fear of saying something that might seem unconventional, incorrect, not according to the canons. This timidity does not appear at all in his little collection of lyrical verse.

De Tabley must be studied quite as closely as Tennyson,

perhaps even more so; for he has not always Tennyson's clearness. To quote much from him is difficult, and I do not wish to quote more than will be necessary to interest you. But I think that you will understand his value better through a close study of a dozen selections from his best pieces. We may begin with an exquisite composition of which the subject is a morning visit to the grave of some beautiful woman, loved and lost. It is entitled "A Woodland Grave."

Bring no jarring lute this way
To demean her sepulchre.
Toys of love and idle day
Vanish as we think of her.
We who read her epitaph,
Find the world not worth a laugh.

Light, our light, what dusty night
Numbs the golden drowsy head?
Lo! empathed in pearls of light,
Morn resurgent from the dead:
From whose amber shoulders flow
Shroud and sheet of cloudy woe.

Woods are dreaming, and she dreams:
Through the foliaged roof above
Down immeasurably streams
Splendour like an angel's love,
Till the tomb and gleaming urn
In a midst of glory burn.

No ordinary poet could write such magnificent verse as this; in such stanzas Lord De Tabley becomes for a moment the equal of Tennyson. Only for a moment. The other stanzas of the poem are indeed scarcely less splendid in workmanship; but they are much less satisfactory in thought and sentiment. Let us look back at the three stanzas just read.

The first, declaring that no music should be played at the

woodland grave, because her loss has taught the mourner the emptiness of all life and all art, needs no explanation. The second, with its beautiful but quite legitimate obscurity, is so contrived as to give you, after careful reading, the exact sensation which the morning hour of the visit to the grave makes within the speaker's mind.

Already you may have noticed the love of this poet for curious and beautiful words, such as "empathed"; also for sonorous Latin words, which are used only when they can give a fine effect, like the word "resurgent." This is an exquisite word here, when we remember that the Latin "resurgo" (I rise) and the Latin "resurgam" (I shall rise again) are commonly used in inscriptions upon tombs, so that the corresponding English "resurgent" here takes a singular *mortuary* value. But the art of Lord De Tabley's verse is, I think, best shown in a splendid ode to the Heavenly Venus with which the final collection of his poems opens.

This ode certainly shows the influence of Swinburne. We know that it never could have been written by him if Swinburne's "Dolores" had not been written first. Lord De Tabley was one of those timid poets who worked best with a model before him; and in spite of the influence of the model he is never a plagiarist. On the contrary he always manages to make his subject appeal to us in a perfectly original way. No English verse was ever written superior in melody and sensuous charm to the wonderful poem of Swinburne just mentioned. Lord De Tabley was too wise to attempt the same kind of measure. He never imitates other men's form. What he has really done, however, is to magnify the subject chosen by Swinburne, and to treat it in an equally powerful, but very different, way. The Venus of Swinburne's "Dolores" is Venus the Prostitute; the Venus of Lord De Tabley is Venus Astarte, the Venus of Lucretius, the all-pervading creating power of the universe, of the universe as comprehended by the modern mind.

This subject, I need scarcely tell you, is very grand as well as very terrible; but Lord De Tabley had the greatest Roman poets and philosophers to suggest to him how it should be treated. I am sure that you will admire some of these stanzas from the "Hymn to Astarte."

Regent of Love and Pain,
  Before whose ageless eyes,
The nations pass as rain,
  And thou abidest, wise,
    As dewdrops in a cup,
    To drink thy children up.

Parent of Change and Death,
  We know thee and are sad,—
The scent of thy pale wreath,
  Thy-lip-touch and the glad
    Sweep of thy glistening hair;—
    We know thee, bitter-fair!

Empress of Earth, and queen
  Of cloud—Time's early born
Daughter, enthroned between
  Grey Sleep and emerald Morn,
    Ruler of us who fade,—
    God, of the gods obeyed!

Divine, whose eye-glance sweet
  Is earth and heaven's desire;
Beneath whose pearly feet,
  The skies irradiate fire,
    And the cold cloud-way glows
    As some rain-burnished rose.

Heaven, dumb before thy face,
  With fear and deep delight,
Tingles through all its space;
  The abysmal shuddering night,
    Breaks, as in golden tears,
    Into a thousand spheres!

You must understand the classical and philosophic

fancy, however, to understand more than splendid form and sound. It is the Creating Power that is thus addressed, the Love that is older than all gods, that made the heavens and the worlds before making the gods themselves and making the hearts of men. And this power acts equally in the attraction of sun by sun and in the attraction of the heart of man by the beauty of woman. Only the philosopher, the deep thinker, can perceive the infinite character of this power, can identify it with all that men have justly named Divine; but all men feel in some sort the influence of it upon their lives, in the pleasures and in the pains of affection. However, few think to themselves that the force which they call love is really the same thing that fills the great night of space with the millions of the stars. Now love and death are really very closely related, just as the Greeks supposed them to be and as the mythology of India also represented them. In fact, they are but two different modes of the same infinite force. That which creates is also that which destroys; therefore in the Indian myth the most formidable personification of divinity is represented with the symbol of life in one hand, and a skull, the symbol of death, in the other. Life is possible only because of death—death is like the rhythm of life; we decay because we grow, and we die only because we are born. Just why these things should be we do not know, probably never shall know; but we can perceive the law. It is this mysterious law, at once beautiful and terrible, tender and cruel, which the poet is really representing. So the greatest of Roman poets and thinkers, Lucretius, represented it nearly two thousand years ago. The subject is the most imposing that a poet could touch. Lord De Tabley was not perhaps enough of a thinker to express with sublimity the profounder phases of the mystery as a greater philosopher might have expressed them. But he had before him the thoughts of greater men; and the splendour of his verse makes up for the philosophical weakness he might be accused of.

When you look into the sky on a beautiful clear night, without a moon, you see a long white trail reaching over the heavens like a ghostly bridge; you know that all ancient religions taught poetical legends about this apparition. In some mythologies it is a Celestial River; in others it is a Road of Souls, the pathway of the dead. The Egyptians represented it, however, in the most weird of all forms, as the white body of a woman bending across the sky, her feet touching one horizon and her hands the other, the highest part of the arch figuring her flanks and breast. This was Neit, mother of the gods and of all worlds. Very curious are the pictures of Neit painted by the old Egyptian artists. The Greeks had a less sublime but more tender fancy about the white track; they said that it was formed by milk that had dropped from the breasts of the mother of the gods, and they were the first to call it the Milky Way, a term which in the Latin translation we still use—*Via Lactea*. Now the Egyptian and the Greek and many other myths were in the later times of the Roman Empire fused together, in explaining the attributes of deity. Eastern teachers had shown the Romans how to make their divinities infinite in conception; and Astarte, as the Romans came to know her, became a blending of thousands of divinities and divine attributes. Lord De Tabley takes this later conception of Astarte, containing both Greek and Egyptian elements, for his theme; and it has enabled him to create the following wonderful stanzas:

> . . . Each dewdrop of thy breast
> Becomes a starry world,
> And the vast breathless skies
> Are strewn with galaxies.
>
> Nurse of Eternity
> Thy bosom feeds the Sun.
> From thy maternity
> All breasts in nature run.
> Astarte, to thy ray,
> Sick of all gods, we pray.

The sublime imagery here is a magnification both of the ancient Egyptian fancy and of the Greek dream of Cybele, the All-nourishing Mother, making all fruitful. I suppose you will see that the magnification is chiefly due to the introduction of modern astronomical ideas. To us the heavens have become incomparably vaster than they were to the ancients; therefore, when we apply to the celestial vision any of the strange or beautiful ancient similes, those similes become immensely magnified and infinitely more imposing. The poet also addresses Astarte as a divinity of destiny, of love-destiny—the fate that makes the union of every one with the chosen woman.

Ah, could a mortal gaze
  In thy mysterious eyes;
And through their mirrored maze
  And treasured secrecies,
    See rising like a star,
    The soul he wants afar!

This is very beautiful, the wish that one could see within the eyes of God the image of the woman desired, the one soul in all things harmonious with the soul of the seeker, the ideal woman that every man dreams of, but that so few ever find. Here I may quote a few verses from the description of Love's temple, because of their musical and luminous beauty.

I have seen thy silver fane
  And trod thy slippery stair,
Red with a crimson rain,
  And footworn with despair.
    Pale as dead men, ah, sweet!
    We kneel to kiss thy feet.

We have leave one little hour
  In thy white house to doze:
Broad passion-flowers embower
  The portals amber-rose,
    And lotos-lilies keep
    Guard at thy shrine of sleep.

As drowsy flies which bide
In some grey spider's snare;
Sleep-locked yet open-eyed,
Glad, yet in half despair,
Lovers and maidens sit
In the yellow gates of it!

The suggestion here is of the eternal illusion that urges men to all desperate things, causing death and crime and suicide for the sake of an ideal. Therefore is the shrine described as red with the blood of men. The reference to the passion flowers needs no explanation; but I may remind you that the Greek lotus flowers signify sleep, a sleep like that of opium, in which the eyes see and ears continue to hear and the body is free to move, yet all things seem unreal and far away. In the third of the stanzas quoted the lovers are represented as being helpless like flies in the web of spiders, caught in the great spider-web of their passion. They are at once both glad and sad; everything seems to them very beautiful, more beautiful than it really could be; and the gates of the shrine at which they worship appear to be of purest yellow gold. But all this is only dream, fascination, folly; nothing lasts, beauty withers, youth vanishes, and death ends the passion and the illusion. What then is the meaning of this love power, this irresistible attraction that comes upon men? And what is death?

Ah, girl-mouth, burning dew
That made the violet faint,
What shall become of you,
My silver-breasted saint?
What morning shall arise
Upon those darkened eyes?

In other words, what is the use of loveliness and love, beauty and worship, charm and youth, since all these pass away like smoke? Will the face that charms, the voice that caresses, ever be seen, ever be heard of again? Religions change or die, the gods themselves die and are for-

gotten, but the tremendous mystery of the universe remains —the mystery of love creating all things, only to give them to death. What does it mean?

Locked in blind heaven aloof
The gods are grey and dead,
Worn is the old world's woof,
Weary the sun's bright head.
The sea is out of tune
And sick the silver moon.

The May-fly lives an hour,
A star a million years;
But as a summer flower,
Or as a maiden's fears
They pass, and heaven is bare
As though they never were.

God withers his place,
His patient angels fade;
Love, on thy sacred face,
Of tear and sunbeam made,
In our perplexity
We turn, and gazing die!

This is only another way, though a sublime and very weird one, of stating the great mystery of life. We do not know where we came from, nor why we exist, nor where we are going to; and we see that perpetual change is the order of the universe. But one thing ever remains the same—the attraction of sex for sex, the desire of the male for the female, the perpetual illusion of love, with all its joys and and all its pains. What the creating power may be, the power that shapes, the power that dissolves, we do not know. But it is surely the same power which makes suns burn, that also makes the beauty of woman seem of all things the fairest to the heart of a young man.

I would next call your attention to a fragment of the poem of Circe. Perhaps I had better first say something about

Circe herself, though this has very little to do with the poem. Circe, in old Greek story, was a beautiful witch, who lived on an island of which she was the supreme ruler. All men who came to that island were hospitably invited to her home, and feasted on their favourite foods. Some of them were even allowed to make love to her, to share her bed. But sooner or later each of them was given a cup of magical wine to drink, and when he had drunk this wine he was changed into a beast. In the story of Circe, as told by Homer, the companions of Ulysses were turned into swine by this means; Ulysses himself, however, was cunning enough not to let himself be bewitched. I suppose you see the moral, the inner meaning which we can take from the myth. The name Circe is still given to that kind of wanton woman who can make men not simply foolish, but wicked and worthless; the love of a bad woman really can change a man into a beast, morally speaking. The story has inspired hundreds of artists, both in ancient and in modern times. Lord De Tabley treats the subject only artistically, not morally; he gives us only a word-picture of the interior of Circe's palace, and the strange things that could be seen there. The descriptive passage which I am going to quote is a very fine example of goldsmith work in language, the very jewellery of verse,

> . . . Reared across a loom
> Hung a fair web of tapestry half done,
> Crowding with folds and fancies half the room:
> Men eyed as gods, and damsels stiff as stone,
> Pressing their brows alone,
> In amethystine robes,
> Or reaching at the polished orchard-globes,
> Or rubbing parted love-lips on their rind,
> While the wind
> Sows with sere apple-leaves their breast and hair.
> And all the margin there
> Was arabesqued and bordered intricate

With hairy spider things
That catch and clamber,
And salamander in his dripping cave,
Satanic ebon-amber;
Blind worm, and asp, and eft of cumbrous gait
And toads who love rank grasses near a grave,
And the great goblin moth, who bears
Between his wings the ruined eyes of death;
And the enamelled sails
Of butterflies, who watch the morning's breath,
And many an emerald lizard with quick ears
Asleep in rocky dales.
And for an outer fringe embroidered small,
A ring of many locusts, horny coated,
A round of chirping tree-frogs merry-throated,
And sly, fat fishes sailing, watching all.

This is a description of the tapestry in the detailed Greek manner, reminding us of the famous classic description of the shield of Achilles. But the charm of the work is in the effectiveness and suggestiveness of the word-choosing. "Polished orchard globes" means of course only apples, but the phrase gives you the exact idea as to what kind of apple is referred to. "Ebon-amber" is the best expression possible to describe the semi-diaphanous dark body of the salamander; and the adjective Satanic joined to this, suggests the fantastic ugliness of the strange creature. I do not know whether any of you have seen the death's-head moth, which is very common in England and is a great enemy of bee-hives. Upon the back of this moth you can see very plainly the figure of a human skull; the insect has therefore naturally been associated for hundreds of years with superstitious fancy. The thing about a skull which first especially strikes the observer is the absence of eyes; the aspect of the great hollow cavities has something sinister which startles and sometimes terrifies. By using the phrase "ruined eyes of death" instead of the term skull, a very powerful image is produced. Notice also the delicate use

of the word "shells" to describe the wings of the butterfly; it has been used by very old poets, but not to describe such small pinions as those of an insect. Its effectiveness here is especially in the suggestion of the slow flight peculiar to the butterfly, whose wings move so slowly that you can always see them beating the air, and to the eye they really look like tiny shells, whereas the wings of a dragon-fly or of a bee in motion are not seen at all except as a kind of haze about the creature's back.

Speaking of insects, one of the most remarkable of all poems ever made about insects is Lord De Tabley's "Study of a Spider." This poem I found to be much too elaborate for the general lecture on insect poetry which I gave lately in another class; it would have required too much explanation. But in this class we can very well study its extraordinary and fantastic charm. All the words here are chosen with a view to producing one general effect of horror. The spider suggests a great many things to poets. It suggests beauty, curiosity, and terror, and the poet may take his choice among these characteristics. Lord De Tabley has chosen to take the grimmer aspect, just as Browning chose to take the ghostly one when he wrote in "Mesmerism" the famous lines—

> And the spider, to serve his ends,
> By a sudden thread,
> Arms and legs outspread,
> On the table's midst descends,—
> Come to find, God knows what friends!

Really the spider is an awful creature in a certain way; and the very ugliest fact about it is the sexual relation of the insect. The female spider is much larger than the male. After the male approaches and fecundates her, she turns upon upon him and devours him. After I have told you this fact, you will not perhaps think that Lord De Tabley is too severe in his judgment of the spider.

From holy flower to holy flower
Thou weavest thine unhallowed bower,
The harmless dewdrops, beaded thin,
Ripple along thy ropes of sin.
Thy house a grave, a gulf thy throne
Affrights the fairies every one.
Thy winding-sheets are grey and fell,
Imprisoning with nets of hell
The lovely births that winnow by,
Winged sisters of the rainbow sky:
Elf-darlings, fluffy, bee-bright things,
And owl-white moths with mealy wings,
And tiny flies, as gawzy thin
As e'er were shut electrum in,
These are thy death spoils, insect ghoul,
With their dear life thy fangs are foul.
Thou felon anchorite of pain
Who sittest in a world of slain.
Hermit, who tunest song unsweet
To heaving wing and writhing feet.
A glutton of creation's sighs,
Miser of many miseries.
Toper, whose lonely feasting chair
Sways in inhospitable air.
The board is bare, the bloated host
Drinks to himself toast after toast
His lip requires no goblet brink,
But like a weasel must he drink.
The vintage is as old as time
And bright as sunset, pressed and prime.

Ah, venom-mouth and shaggy thighs,
And paunch grown sleek with sacrifice,
Thy dolphin-back and shoulders round
Coarse-hairy, as some goblin hound,
Whom a hog rides to sabbath on,
While shuddering stars in fear grow wan,—
Thou palace priest of treachery,
Thou type of selfish lechery,
I break the toils around thy head,
And from their gibbets take thy dead.

In the first two lines the words "holy" and "unhal-

lowed" are of course used as synonym and antonym. You may ask why a flower should be spoken of as holy, sacred. It is because flowers represent in Western symbolism virtues, excellences, and proprieties—things divine and things beautiful. Thus the white lily signifies chastity; the violet, maidenly modesty; the rose, ever so many things which are holy—to mention only the highest circle of heaven, the symbolic name of the Mother of God, and the charm of womanhood. Among these flowers, emblems of all pure and holy things, the spider's nest does indeed represent all the contraries,—hell as compared with heaven, the devil with angels, crime as contrasted with the highest and most beautiful expression of life. Even the frail beauty of the dew, as indicated in the next couplet, ceases to seem beautiful on the strings of the deadly snare of the spider. The reference to the fairies must be understood in relation to the pretty superstitions that good fairies lived in flowers. In the next few couplets there is nothing to explain, but please notice the delicate power and beauty of the adjectives. "Fell," the old word signifying deadly, has a fine quality here as coupled with the word "grey" to describe the web, rightly termed a winding-sheet, the wrapping of the dead. "Fluffy" gives us the idea of something cottony or flossy, like silk waste; the bodies of many beautiful insects look as if they were covered with a kind of silk or cotton floss. The verb "winnow" here expresses especially the visible motion of the butterfly's wings. Why is the moth compared to an owl, in the line about "owl-white moths"? Because both are night creatures and fly about at the same time. The white owl has a very beautiful plumage, and looks like a mass of snow. So does the white English night moth, which has a remarkably plump body, covered with something like snowy down. Moths and butterflies may both be said to have "mealy wings"; you can not touch the wing without getting your fingers smirched with something that appears to be like flour

but is really composed of beautiful scale-feathers. A little further you read of flies being shut into "electrum"; perhaps you will not be so accustomed to this word as to the word "amber." Of course you know that in amber there has been preserved for us many kinds of insects, some of which do not now seem to exist. "Ghoul," ought to be familiar to everybody who has read the Arabian stories. The word is of Arab origin; the ghoul is a creature supposed to live in cemeteries, to devour the bodies of the dead, and to entice the living to destruction. Sometimes the ghoul takes the form of a beautiful woman sitting by the road side and inviting the caress of travellers. But whoever approaches her is devoured. Next we have a spider described as a felon or criminal anchorite—that is to say, hermit. The solitary habit of the spider could hardly be better described by any two words. The hermit is supposed to pass part of his time in singing hymns; the spider hermit is silent, but he makes his victims sound harsh music—meaning the buzzing of the captured flies, whose struggles are excellently described by the words "heaving wings and writhing feet." The words "toper" and "bloated" refer commonly to drunkards, the latter word picturing the swollen appearance of the face and body of the habitual drinker. The spider has indeed a bloated look, but it is blood that he drinks, not wine; therefore his drink is spoken of as being old as time and bright as sunset—that is, bright red like the sinking sun. The weasel does not eat the flesh of its victims, but sucks the blood; the spider is especially a sucker, so his drinking is compared to the drinking of the weasel. The last ten lines of the composition include comparisons of the spider to all ugly things, coupled in all monstrous contrasts. Notice the word "shaggy" in the first of these lines; it means much more than hairy—a shaggy surface is one covered not with smooth but with long rough hair. The back is compared to a dolphin's only because it is humped; and round shoulders refer to deformed shoul-

ders. A round-shouldered person is a person who can not stand straight. "Goblin hound"—that is to say, goblin dog—is a comparsion that will scarcely be familiar to some of you unless you have seen pictures of the witches' Sabbath. In some of the finely illustrated German editions of Faust you will be able to find such pictures. The witches are represented as going to attend the wicked sacrifices at night, riding through the air upon goblin animals, such as goats and dogs. These spectral animals are really evil demons, and the witches are mostly represented as very ugly old women, called "hags." Next we have the term "palace priest of treachery," probably because many of the famous intrigues of history were managed by priests who in virtue of their sacred character were trusted in the palaces of kings. In the last line but one, remember that the word "toils" is often used by old poets to signify the lines of a snare or the meshes of a net.

With this hasty analysis of the description, I believe that you will be able to find some pleasure in studying the lines for yourselves. No poem in the book gives a fuller illustration of Lord de Tabley's skill as a master of fine language. With the "Study of a Spider," we may close this lecture about him. If you can appreciate the few selections which I have made, I think you will like to return at a later time to the study of him.

CHAPTER XIV

NOTE ON SOME FRENCH ROMANTICS

I HAD hoped, in the latter part of the term, to give a lecture upon the relation between the English and the French romantic movement; but there will not be time to treat the subject except in the briefest possible way. However, these few notes should be of some use to you. Every student, of course, should be aware that the great movements in modern literature have never been confined to one country only. The romantic movement of which we have been treating in its relation to English literature, really extended over all Europe. It represented a change not merely in English literature, but in Occidental literature. Every country influenced every other, and each was influenced by all. The benefit of the change effected in France was extended speedily to England and to Germany; and England in turn gave both to German and to French literature the benefits of its own literary reform. The most brilliant of all the romantic movements was certainly the French; and England owes more to French influence than to any other. It has always been so. The English classical literature of the eighteenth century was modelled upon French classic literature. The English romances of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had their counterparts in France; nor was it until the huge French romances had been translated into English that the English work developed an original character of its own. Go back yet farther, to the Middle Ages proper, and you will find English literature equally if not more indebted to France. And finally you must remember that in the eleventh century French became the language of England and long continued to be. Although originally springing from strangely different sources, the

English and the French languages have so interacted upon each other that English and French literatures are more closely related than any other two literatures of Europe.

The French romantic movement, like the English, was a gradual development; we can trace it well back into the eighteenth century, and should do so if there were time. Suffice now to say that the blossoming of this movement began about the same time that English romanticism had its triumphs, just about the time when Tennyson was beginning to make himself felt. There were before that French poets of original and beautiful talent, who corresponded somewhat in the history of romanticism to our earlier romantics, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Scott. But the real triumph began in the early thirties—between 1830 and 1834, let us say—though Victor Hugo's "Orientales" appeared as early as 1829. There is one thing, however, worth noticing—that with a solitary exception, that of Dumas, nearly all of the great romantics were born just about the beginning of the century, 1802, 1804, up to 1811. Even Dumas came very nearly being born in the nineteenth century, for his date is 1799.

I do not think the French romantic movement was so much superior to the English in poetry as in prose; indeed, the matter is very disputable, and if we grant the French superiority, it is rather because of the finer qualities of their language than because of higher qualities of thought or feeling. To the student in this country, moreover, the poetical part of the movement is the least likely to appeal. I do not know that it would do you any more good to read the French romantic poets than to read the great English romantic poets. The English poets will furnish you with quite as many ideas and sentiments. But the French poetry was of a totally different order—much more passionate, warm, musical and brightly coloured than the average of English romantic poetry. And it was more perfect as to form; the English language is not capable of producing

verses of such jewelled splendours as the "Émaux et Camées" of Théophile Gautier. For this reason, perhaps, it may be rather to your interest to give your first attention to French poetry. I shall, however, make this lecture deal chiefly with the story tellers among the French romantics, and their peculiarities as masters of style.

There are a number of names to be mentioned, but most of these can be classed under two heads. You will remember that in our English Victorian and pre-Victorian epochs there were two remarkably different styles in use, and that these two styles continue to prevail. There is an ornate or highly romantic style; and there is the severe style, simple as anything in classic literature, or even more simple,—without any ornament, and yet with extraordinary power of touching the emotions. In French literature we find the very same thing. But a curious terminology was invented to describe these differences in French style; and it is so queer, so easy to remember, that I am going to use it in this lecture. The writers of very ornate prose, like Gautier and Hugo, have been called myopic stylists—men who wrote as if they were myopic, very near sighted, seeing things in all their details very closely, and so able to describe every little item. But writers of the other style, like Mérimée, were called presbyopic or far-sighted stylists—describing as if they saw clearly at vast distances, but did not distinguish small things in their immediate neighbourhood.

The great names, of course, are Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset, Sainte-Beuve, Théophile Gautier, Alexandre Dumas, Honoré de Balzac, Prosper Mérimée and "George Sand" (Armandine Lucile Dudevant)—in the first group. Of Sainte-Beuve, the greatest critic who ever lived, I have already spoken, and of his influence upon English criticism; he need be mentioned here only as an infallible guide. Without reading him no one can hope to form a correct taste in French literature.

Victor Hugo's name and work is so well known that we

need treat of him very briefly. And the same may be said of Alexandre Dumas, the nearest French approach to our British Sir Walter Scott, though far surpassing Scott in fantastic imagination. As to Balzac, who is not particularly a stylist, we need remark only that he attempted successfully the immense feat of describing the whole of French life, and the conditions of every class of society, in a vast succession of novels, nearly all of which are linked together, so that the characters in one story re-appear in another—the whole representing some fifty-two volumes.

"George Sand," who in all respects resembles the English George Eliot, was especially a writer of passionate love stories; she does not figure as a stylist, for her books will not bear the test of being twice read with pleasure. A book that you can not read twice with a feeling of pleasure has no style. But although not a stylist, and now a little wearisome to read, this woman really founded a great school of romantic novel writing, which continues to this day. The styles of the group are best represented in the persons of Théophile Gautier, and of Prosper Mérimée,—the former being the most decorative of all French stylists, and the latter the least decorative and the most severe. As for Victor Hugo I am not going to say much about him, for the reasons already given; in his way he was quite as ornamental as any one else, but only in a way. His style is incomparably more irregular than that of Carlyle; it is rather an idiosyncrasy than a style. To tempt you to study these writers I should recommend their short stories as better than their long ones for a beginning, and I shall speak particularly of these. But such writers as Alfred de Musset and Balzac also wrote short stories, some of which may be advantageously mentioned as representative of the second great style referred to. To sum up first: Victor Hugo represented the Gothic spirit of the movement, best exemplified in his terrible mediaeval story of "Nôtre Dame." De Musset, with some classic tendencies, gives us in his prose tales

a light delicacy and grace of narrative that almost belongs as much to the eighteenth as to the nineteenth century. Gautier, the second greatest power in the movement—he could produce more perfect poetry than even Victor Hugo—is also the greatest of all French masters of rich style; I should remind you that he was also the historian of the romantic movement, which he recorded in a charming series of studies entitled "Histoire du Romantisme." Alexandre Dumas represents the novel of incident. Balzac takes a place apart, for his innovation was something entirely original. Mérimée, both historian and story teller, resembles our English Froude in more ways than one. And George Sand was the mother of that endless series of novels of passion—illegitimate passion rather than legitimate—which have not yet ceased to pour from the Parisian press.

Gautier I shall speak of first. He was a charming man and a very great scholar, and something of his character as well as of his scholarship accounts for the extraordinary beauty of his work. He was one of the few great journalists who never wrote an unkind word about any man, although he attacked parties and principles which he considered wrong. He proclaimed the doctrine of art for art's sake—the creation or reflection of beauty as the chief object of art. His knowledge of Greek thought and feeling particularly influenced his artistic doctrine; unless the subject were beauty, he would not touch it. In this he differed very much from Hugo, who delighted in the horrible and the grotesque. One of his eccentricities is worth mentioning; his chief pleasure was the reading of the dictionary, and it was his custom to ask any young aspirant for literary honours, "Do you like to read dictionaries?" If the young man said, "Yes," they were friends; if he said, "No," Gautier suspected that he would never become a sincere lover of art. Most certainly it was by the study of dictionaries that Gautier became a veritable magician of style, but it does not follow that the same method succeeds in all cases. It

succeeded with him not only because he was a genius, but because he had had the very best classical training, and he put it to the most romantic use. We have nothing in English at all like his books—there is nobody to compare with him. You must try to remember just these two things about him—that he chose only subjects which he thought beautiful and heroic, and that he treated them in a most exquisite way. But his æsthetics were not narrow; beauty of any kind attracted him, no matter to what age or part of the world it might belong. Do you remember the story of De Quincey about the Spanish nun? The subject is a strange one—that of a woman becoming a soldier and a swordsman, distinguished for force, courage, and beauty—a very romantic subject. Besides the Spanish story there is a story in French history of a lady named de Maupin who actually fought duels with the sword. How charming the story of a woman in man's clothes can be made, Shakespeare has given us more than one supreme example; you will remember "Twelfth Night," for example, and "As You Like It." Out of these three elements Gautier composed his famous "Mademoiselle de Maupin," the story of a woman in man's clothes, who has all kinds of amorous adventures. Perhaps there was also some inspiration from the old Italian writers, such as Boccaccio. Certainly the book was immoral. But it was also very beautiful, and it was written especially as a defiance to conventions. Gautier himself was the most moral of men; but he fought against any restrictions upon literature, either of religion or convention. And he succeeded, he broke down the bars. But it was in his short stories perhaps that he proved himself greatest. There are several volumes of these. The best two are simply entitled "Romans et Contes," and "Nouvelles." The greatest of all romantic short stories in French literature is probably "La Morte Amoureuse," and that you will find in one of these volumes. It is a vampire story—the story of a dead woman who comes in the night to suck the

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blood of a lover, whom she keeps in a state of magical illusion. Such a subject can be very horrible, but Gautier made it very beautiful. Quite as remarkable, I think, is the story of Arria Marcella, telling of the coming back from the dead, through the power of passion, of a woman buried for thousands of years. The beauty of this story is especially in the artistic resurrection of the life of Pompeii; and very considerable archæological knowledge was required to write it. Another wonderful little story is called "Le Pied de la Momie," or the Mummy's Foot; it deals with the life of ancient Egypt. A man who has the dried foot of a female mummy purchased as a curio, wishes he could see, as in life, the person to whom that foot once belonged; and she comes to him out of the night of five thousand years, and brings him under ground to the assembly of her ancestors, myriads of dead kings and princes. A fourth story treats on a subject well known in Japanese tradition, the animation of a beloved picture, the picture in this case being embroidered instead of painted. But I cannot tell you more about Gautier's stories in this short lecture: if you will simply take those two volumes and choose for yourselves, you will find what a wonderful writer and story teller he is. There is but one draw-back—his love of extraordinary words; you can not read his artistic stories without having a dictionary of art at your elbow.

Very different is it with Prosper Mérimée. Gautier loved long rolling sentences, long soft rhythms; he often composed a sentence a page and a half long, just as Ruskin did. But the sentences of Mérimée are all short, clear, crisp, without rhythms, without extraordinary words, and with the use of the fewest possible number of adjectives. No style, except that of the old Norse writers, is so plain and so simple.

It would be hard to say where his style appears to the best advantage—in his histories, in his stories, or in his letters. As for his histories, such as "Les Cosaques d'Autrefois," they read like the best of romances, though nobody

could claim that he is in the least defective or inaccurate as an historian. The book upon the great Cossacks is the very best that I know of—perhaps, indeed, the only book that gives you in brief space a clear idea of the old time struggle between Russia and her Tartar conquerors, as well as a history of the marvellous militia, the Cossacks themselves. The accounts of the cavalry battles are spirited enough almost to lift the reader off his feet. Another strange book of his deals with the famous impostor who pretended to be the legitimate heir to the throne of Russia, and actually succeeded almost in making himself emperor. This is "Les Faux Démétrius" (for there were two of these impostors), and gives such a picture of Russian life in the old time as you will not find in any other single volume. Mérimée liked the Middle Ages, too, and he has given us some wonderful essays upon French history. By the way, you should remember that it was he who helped Napoleon III to write his famous history of Cæsar. But to the mass of readers Mérimée is better known by his wonderful stories —"Carmen," "Colomba," "Tamango," "Mateo Falcone," "La Venus d'Ille," and so forth. The first mentioned of the above, "Carmen," is the story of a Spanish soldier bewitched by a gipsy girl, for whose sake he becomes a murderer and robber. He kills her at last in prison, on the evening before his execution. A more terrible story, and yet a more touching story, was never written. The book is, moreover, a revelation of certain characteristics of Spanish gipsies. I think you know that it has been made into an opera, the music of which was composed by the great musician Bizet, who represented the romantic movement in music. Those who have heard the Spanish and Havana melodies introduced into this opera will not easily forget them. "Colombo" is the story of a Corsican vendetta. It is a matchless picture of Corsican manners and customs, as full of poetry as they are of ferocity. "Mateo Falcone" is another Corsican story, short and frightful, about a father,

who, although an outlaw, kills his little boy for betraying the honour of the family. "Tamango" is the story of a slave ship, founded on fact. The slaves rise in revolt, kill the captain and the crew, and seize the ship; but they do not know how to navigate her, and she drifts about hopelessly until nearly all on board are dead. "La Venus d'Ille," is the tale of an antique statue, which exerts a ghostly and fatal charm upon its possessor. I have been selecting only a few titles out of many, and it would be useless perhaps to mention the variety from the Italian, Spanish, German and Russian studies scattered through Mérimée's volumes. For the charm of the man is so very great that if you read only one or two of his tales you can scarcely rest until you have read them all. And a noteworthy fact about Mérimée, which also shows the bent of his taste, is that he is almost the first to introduce European readers to the wonderful merit of the Russian novelists. He first made translations from Gogol and Pushkin, and among his translations from the Russian the most extraordinary thing is the little story entitled "La Dame de Pique" (Queen of Spades), a marvellous narrative about a gambler's life in which a certain fatal card plays a tragical part. There are also to be found in Mérimée things which are not exactly stories—rather studies in realism, which anticipate Maupassant, such as the little piece entitled "L'Enlèvement de la Redoute" (the capture of the Redout), the narrative of a soldier who helped to storm the fortress. He describes only what he felt and saw, in the simple language of a soldier, and the narrative gives the reader exactly the sensation of having been in the fight.

Gautier must have taught a great deal about style to English writers; Mérimée could only be admired. The Englishman who comes nearest to Mérimée in style is Froude. Mérimée is a much greater artist, writing in a much more perfect language, and I doubt whether any Englishman can ever succeed in producing exactly the same effects. In French, Mérimée had no imitator before Maupassant; and

even Maupassant could not surpass him. It is true that the charm of Mérimée is partly due to the strange and exotic character of his subjects, but independently of the subject the method is always supreme. We may say that his was the most realistic of styles, although producing the most romantic effects.

Of the other writers, only a few need be dealt with at some length. The prose of De Musset, the beautiful little stories of Italian and Parisian life, though romantic in feeling, are written also in a very plain style, approaching that of Mérimée but not equalling it. A better example of his style is in the famous "Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle" (The Confession of a child of the age), which is a passionate piece of autobiography. It tells us all the pain and despair and jealousy of a young man betrayed by the woman to whom he was attached, and the man was the author himself, though other names are of course used. One of the female characters in the narrative is supposed to be the famous George Sand. De Musset was her lover for a time, and it appears by his own confession that he was a very difficult man for any woman to live with. But, whatever may be the right or the wrong of the story, there is no doubt about the passionate pathos and the beauty of the book. However, De Musset was not of much influence in French prose. The great influences of the first period were Gautier and Mérimée.

It is possible, of course, for a man to affect literature through stories which do not depend for their immortal merit upon mere style, but upon imagination and suggestion. Now Balzac is one of those who did this. His enormous series of novels did not affect French literature as prose; they served only to establish a new school of fiction. He was not at his best as a stylist in this long chain of interlinked novels, but when he took to writing short stories it was quite a different matter, and some of the short stories must live for all time.

The most famous of all these is the "Peau de Chagrin." I think you know that the word "chagrin" means grief, but it also means a particular preparation of leather for which we use the word "shagreen." The double signification in the title can be best valued through a notion of the story. A young man in a second-hand dealer's shop, finds exposed for sale a curious skin or parchment, covered with magical characters. He wishes to buy it, but is warned by the dealer that if he buys it it will destroy him. It is a magical skin, and it has this extraordinary property that anybody who possesses it can gratify any wish which he may express. But so soon as the wish is gratified, two things happen—the skin shrinks and becomes much smaller, and the life of the wisher is shortened correspondingly. As you may well suppose, the young man buys the skin and proceeds to gratify a great number of wishes. He wishes to be rich, and he is rich; he wishes for power, and he obtains power; he wishes to have the most beautiful woman in the world, and the beautiful woman becomes his wife. By the time he begins to feel rather satisfied, the skin has become terribly small, and his life is apparently very near an end. Then he discovers that he must absolutely stop wishing for anything in order that he may be able to live a little longer. His physician warns him that he must not think about women at all, not even about his own wife. You can very well imagine the end of the story. One sensual wish comes, the skin disappears, and the life of the man departs. You can see that this is a very great story because of the great moral in it. It is quoted everywhere, and every student should at least remember the title.

Again Balzac produced two volumes of stories entitled "Contes Drolatiques," translated into English under the title of "Droll Stories from the Abbeys of Touraine." The English translation, with its 425 illustrations by Doré, is very fair; but it scarcely gives you an idea of the astonishing art of the original, written in the quaint French of the

sixteenth century. These stories are certainly of the kind that remain immortal, notwithstanding the strangely immoral character of many of them. They reflect the life of the Middle Ages in all its horror and superstition, but also in all its tenderness and poetry. There are very extraordinary stories. They begin by making you laugh; a little further along they become very sensual, in the worst sense; then all at once they become so intensely human and pathetic as to bring tears to the eyes. Now there are very few stories of that sort in the literature of the world—grotesque, immoral, comical, human and pathetic. But we feel that the life of the time described was really a life of this kind; the morals were not as now, many of the customs were atrocious, cruelty was the rule rather than an exception in the governing of cities, and yet the emotions of love and heroism and all the tender feelings existed very much as they exist today. Feeling this, we cease to find fault with the immoral parts of the story. These only tell the truth about the form of life that has passed away. You have that book in the English translation in the library; and it would be better to read the English version first before trying the French, for the French is of the sixteenth century and requires a little patience to become familiar with.

Another group of romantics came later who also influenced prose literature, though poetry much more. In fact, to be quite accurate, there were three groups; the French romantic movement passed in three great waves; but we need not make the distinction here, because we are not considering poetry, for want of time. The names of the second group especially to be considered are Gérard de Nerval, Louis Bertrand, Charles Baudelaire, Gustave Flaubert. Nerval, a friend of Gautier, figured much later than Gautier as a successful writer. His story is very extraordinary. Undoubtedly he was a little mad, and it is possible that he became mad by reason of a love affair. But he was never too mad to write the most wonderful books. As a mere boy he made

a French translation of Goethe's "Faust" which Goethe himself judged to be the best translation in existence. At one time of his life he went to Egypt, declared himself a Mohamedan, adopted the customs of the country, went to the slave market and bought himself a wife. She appears to have been a Turkish girl of very decided character, and as soon as she perceived she had been bought by a madman, she set all laws and customs at defiance by leaving her would-be husband and fleeing to Damascus—at least such is the story. But in spite of this disappointment Nerval obtained plenty of inspiration from his experience in the East. He travelled as far as Jerusalem, and returned to France to write his wonderful "Scènes de la Vie Orientale," in two volumes, one of the most beautiful books of travel and one of the strangest ever produced. There is contained in it perhaps his masterpiece in the way of romance, the history of King Solomon and of Balkis, the Queen of Sheba. This narrative is quite as grand as anything in the Arabian Nights. Meyerbeer, the great musician, actually wrote music for it in the hope of producing it operatically upon the stage, before having discovered that no stage could ever be built large enough to produce such a drama. For the author's imagination was enormous; his pictures represented vastness of scenery such as really could be observed only from the tops of the highest mountains. I do not know whether many have found delight in this wonderful story, just because it happens to be in a book of travel. But the other books of Nerval are very well known. The most familiar is "Les Filles de Feu" (Daughters of Fire), terrible characters, you might suppose, but they are very gentle girls indeed. There are four stories each with a woman's name, and each delineating some particular charm of female character. Of course they are very queer, unearthly stories for the most part, but the first is astonishingly human. It is supposed to be the narrative of a damsel of the Middle Ages, who leaves her father's castle secretly in company with an

adventurer, and suffers the bitter consequence of her folly. It is very touching, almost like the mediaeval stories of Balzac, but very pure and told in a style wonderfully simple. Nerval went through France, learning peasants' songs from the peasants, just as Sir Walter Scott did when preparing his "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border." The result of these pilgrimages was "La Bohême Galante," one of the most delightful books on folksong ever written. The chapter on folk-song is only a part of the book, but it is one of the notable books in French literature, and it had great effect in turning the attention of poets to the value of popular ballads. Miscellaneous works and essays by Nerval were collected after his death into book form; and you will find charming things in the collection. The best of all is a wonderful short story called "La Main Enchantée," first entitled "La Main de Gloire," the story of a man who by making a particular contract with the devil obtains the gift of irresistible power in his sword arm. The grotesqueness of the fancy should not prejudice you against the story, for the value of the story is quite independent of the theme. It is as a picture of the Middle Ages that the tale is very great. You see that most of these French romantics went to the Middle Ages for their fiction, just as the English Pre-Raphaelites did.

De Nerval, romantic as he was, came by style closer to Mérimée than to Gautier; his method was very plain and very pure. A new kind of prose was, however, on the verge of appearing. This new kind of prose had been attempted in England a little by Blake, and a little by Coleridge, but it was only perfected in France. I mean prose poetry in the full sense of the word.

Louis Bertrand is an important name, though his only famous book, "Gaspard de la Nuit," is now out of print, and difficult to obtain. He died very young and left nothing else of importance. But this little book had very great influence upon French letters. It was a book of prose poems,

or, if you like, a volume of prose sketches of the most romantic kind, in which every sentence had the rhythm and quality of poetry, and all the text was divided into paragraphs like the verses of the Bible. Bertrand played very much the same part in French literature as Macpherson did, with his Ossian, in England in the latter part of the previous century. There is no evidence of exactly to what extent Bertrand was influenced by Ossian, of which a prose translation was then very popular in France, but it is probable that he was to some degree inspired by it. Bertrand's book did not attract much attention with the public, but men of letters saw its merit, and the poet Baudelaire seized upon the suggestion which it offered for the creation of a new kind of prose. The value of Bertrand was really the impulse which he gave to Baudelaire.

Charles Baudelaire, an eccentric and perhaps slightly mad man of letters, you have perhaps heard of as a poet. He wrote the most extraordinary volume of poetry called "Fleurs du Mal" (Flowers of Evil), and the book is not badly described by its title. As poetry, in regard to form, nothing better was produced by any romantic, but the subjects were most horrible, dealing with crimes and with remorse, despair and other unhealthy emotions. There was also a strange sensualism in the book, something quite exotic and new. But we are now dealing chiefly with Baudelaire as a prose writer, and you should know that he was quite as great in prose as in verse. He was also a great translator—translating into French the best of De Quincey and of Edgar Poe. He himself had very much of the imagination of Poe, but it did not take the form of strange stories. Instead of writing stories, he wrote very short romantic sketches, each representing some particular mood, experience or sorrow. And these, which he collected into one volume, under the title of "Petits Poèmes en Prose," represented the influence of Bertrand. But Baudelaire was much greater than Bertrand. He showed, as never has been shown be-

fore, the extraordinary resources of the French language in prose of poetical form. A year ago I translated for you one of these prose studies, a little composition about the moon, and you may remember what a strange thing it was. The new poetical prose was fairly established by the publication of this book. But such prose was not adapted to the writing of novels and long stories. It could only be used for very short studies of a highly emotional character. French men of letters have since been using the style only for such purposes, and perhaps the most striking follower of Baudelaire in this regard was the historian and scholar Edgar Quinet, whose wonderful bit of prose poetry about a cathedral, "La Cathédrale," you will find in Professor Saintsbury's "Specimens of French Literature."

Yet another kind of prose was attempted by Gustave Flaubert, the greatest of the second romantic group. He was very much influenced by both Gautier and Baudelaire, and he tried to invent a style that would combine both forms of excellence—that is, would give all the effect of the ornate prose of Gautier and of the melodious prose of Baudelaire. He therefore especially attempted the study of words in themselves, classing them according to colours, tones, qualities of hardness or softness; and he attempted to combine them into a musical mosaic of a new sort. In this he was only partially successful. There are two mistakes in the attempt to create such a style. The first is that the highest ornate results of it could only be understood by a few scholarly men of letters; its merits never could appeal to the public. The other mistake is due to the supposition that the same word will necessarily produce the same effect upon all cultured minds. Now, as a matter of fact, this is the mistake still shared by that modern class of small eccentric French poets called Decadents. The same word will not produce the same effect upon differently cultivated minds. On the contrary, the same word is likely to make a distinctly different impression upon nine hundred out of a

thousand minds; for the impression produced will depend upon the mental experience of the reader, which is never the same in any two individuals. Some words there are, as Gautier well knew, which will produce extraordinary effects upon large classes of minds, but that is because such words make an appeal to certain fundamental feelings which are common to the mass of healthy imaginations. Flaubert's theory was wrong, but as he was a great genius, he could not be altogether wrong, and he gave the world a variety of new suggestions, as well as a prose scarcely less ornate than Gautier's, but with an irregular charm of a new kind. He broke down traditional conventions of form as boldly as did Carlyle in England. But he was wise enough to perceive that the same kind of prose would not suit all kinds of literary productions, and he did a great service to letters by writing in three different styles, thus showing how plain or poetical or decorative prose was adapted to different subjects. He thought that the plain prose was especially suited to the novel of real life, and in this style he wrote his great realistic story, "Madame Bovary." He thought that an irregular, fantastic, highly coloured prose was best suited to romance of an exotic character, and in this style he wrote his "Salammbô," which is a story of ancient Carthage; also his wonderful "Trois Contes," three short stories of extraordinary merit as literature. Finally he had an idea that dreams, visions, speculations, notions of the supernatural world, could best be treated in poetical prose; and he wrote his "Tentation de Saint Antoine" in the style of Baudelaire's prose poems. This is a wonderful book, in dramatic form; all the gods, all the religions, all the philosophies that ever existed in the world appear in it, each being described in an utterance of a few lines, like a strain of music. Beside these books, Flaubert wrote a number of novels, not so good. His great novel, "L'Éducation Sentimentale," is not readable; it is a tiresome failure. But his "Bouvard et Pécuchet," the most terrible satire upon human folly ever writ-

ten since the days of Jonathan Swift, is worth reading, and if read, it can never be forgotten. Bouvard and Pécuchet are two bachelors of means, who resolved to pass their lives in the endeavour to master some science, and to make people as happy as possible. One after another, medicine, law, botany, and other sciences are studied and abandoned, because the deeper problems underlying the sciences are never properly treated by the teachers of them, and because of the hypocrisy and sham connected with them. As for trying to make people happy, their experiences with the adoption of a child and some adventures with the other sex cure them of their faith in the goodness of human nature. Though no book was ever more funny to read, no book was ever written which leaves so sad an impression upon the reader.

The greatest followers of Flaubert in his attempt at a fantastic style were the eccentric novelists known as the brothers Goncourt. These men dealt chiefly with the lives of artists; and in that direction their "tormented style" seems to harmonize a little with the subject. But they carried it to such an extravagant extent that they sometimes became unintelligible. The great novelist, Alphonse Daudet, often compared with the English Dickens, though he might be more justly compared with Thackeray, was also considerably influenced by Flaubert. At this period novelists began to swarm; I need not mention more names because I am only tracing the history of a movement. But in approaching the third and last period of French nineteenth century literature, I may call your attention to the remarkable fact that the great romantic Flaubert was the literary father of the greatest realist who ever lived, greater even than Mérimée—Guy de Maupassant. This is good proof of Flaubert's value as a teacher. He understood in what direction the young man's strength lay, and he bade him cultivate that. Regularly, for years, Maupassant used to bring him work to criticize, and as regularly Flaubert insisted that the work should be thrown into the fire. One

knows not whether to admire more the patient severity of the master or the heroic submission of the pupil. The result justified the means.

And now while speaking of that result, a word about another movement in the direction of realism. Its chief apostle, Zola, called it "Naturalism." It had really no other father, and no other really great representative. Zola's theory was that life should be depicted exactly as it is, not only with natural truth, but with scientific truth; and that all the things which it is usually called wrong to write about, ought to be written about without shame. He pretends to follow the scientific method of Comte, which is not really a true scientific method; but what he did follow with more success was the scientific teaching of inherited character. Like Balzac, he conceived a vast series of novels, each of them forming a chapter in the history of a simple family, Rougon-Macquart; and he showed how the result of some one vice in the life of an ancestor spread moral and physical misery through the lives of generations. No matter what critics may say—justly say—about Zola's immorality, filthiness, shamelessness, there can be no question of his genius. He is a very great artist. But he is a great artist not because he is a realist, or a naturalist, as he wished to be called; he is a great artist because in spite of all his theories, he is really a romantic—a man whose imagination is enormous and lurid, and perceives in exaggerated form all the horrible side of human existence. He is a romancer of vice, of foulness, of selfishness, of all the cruel passions and beastly follies that civilization produces. His realism lies only in the fact that he uses notes as they never were used before. For example, in one novel he tells about everything in the life of railways, everything about engines, about coaling, about the qualities of boilers used; in another novel he tells everything about the lives of boys and girls, men and women, working in a great dry-goods shop, and he explains all the thousand details of business. So far he

taught realism, or at least realistic methods, even better than Charles Reade did in England. But he could not use his facts in a purely realistic way; his colossal imagination distorted and exaggerated. That was the reason why his followers—he once had a school—dropped away from him one after another. The naturalistic school is dead; only Zola lives, and he lives because of an individual genius which is not naturalistic at all. At one time Maupassant wrote under his direction, producing two or three marvellous stories that astonished the world. Everybody saw that Maupassant was greater than Zola; but everybody said, "This is not naturalism, this is realism; this brings us back to the days of Prosper Mérimée. Very soon Maupassant left the shadow of Zola, and worked for himself, and became the greatest story teller that the European world has ever seen.

I have spoken of Maupassant before; you know that he represents the purest realism and the simplest style. You have seen that the movement in France of prose has been a good deal like the movement in England. If we except the extreme forms in French prose—the prose poetry of Baudelaire and the so-called naturalism of Zola—the movements are very much alike. In both countries two kinds of prose struggled for the mastery, the ornate kind and the simple kind. In both countries the great masters have proved that with a simple style all the effects of an ornate style can be produced. In both countries the tendency seems to be toward sobriety of style. But the French remain a little in advance of the more conservative English; they have learned the teaching of Flaubert. That teaching, put into its simplest form, is this: "Change your style to suit your subject." Undoubtedly his advice represents the ultimate truth, which Englishmen must accept at a later day. The same kind of style does not suit all possible subjects. Every style has a particular relative value of its own; and the efforts of different schools, even the follies and extravagances of them, have been of lasting service to the evolution of literary knowledge.

CHAPTER XV

SOME FRENCH POEMS ON INSECTS

Last year I gave a lecture on the subject of English poems about insects, with some reference to the old Greek poems on the same subject. But I did not then have an opportunity to make any reference to French poems upon the same subject, and I think that it would be a pity not to give you a few examples.

Just as in the case of English poems about insects, nearly all the French literature upon this subject is new. Insect poetry belongs to the newer and larger age of thought, to the age that begins to perceive the great truth of the unity of life. We no longer find, even in natural histories, the insect treated as a mere machine and unthinking organism; on the contrary its habits, its customs and its manifestation both of intelligence and instinct are being very carefully studied in these times, and a certain sympathy, as well as a certain feeling of respect or admiration, may be found in the scientific treatises of the greatest men who write about insect life. So, naturally, Europe is slowly returning to the poetical standpoint of the old Greeks in this respect. It is not improbable that keeping caged insects as pets may again become a Western custom, as it was in Greek times, when cages were made of rushes or straw for the little creatures. I suppose you have heard that the Japanese custom is very likely to become a fashion in America. If that should really happen, the fact would certainly have an effect upon poetry. I think that it is very likely to happen.

The French poets who have written pretty things about insects are nearly all poets of our own times. Some of them treat the subject from the old Greek standpoint—indeed the beautiful poem of Heredia upon the tomb of a grasshopper

is perfectly Greek, and reads almost like a translation from the Greek. Other poets try to express the romance of insects in the form of a monologue, full of the thought of our own age. Others again touch the subject of insects only in connection with the subject of love. I will give one example of each method, keeping the best piece for the last, and beginning with a pretty fancy about a dragon fly.

MA LIBELLULE

En te voyant, toute mignonne,
Blanche dans ta robe d'azure,
Je pensais à quelque madone
Drapée en un peu de ciel pur.

Je songeais à ces belles saintes
Que l' on voyait au temps jadis
Sourire sur les vitres peintes,
Montrant d'un doigt le paradis:

Et j'aurais voulu, loin du monde
Qui passait frivole entre nous,
Dans quelque retraite profonde
T' adorer seul à deux genoux.

This first part of the poem is addressed of course to a beautiful child, some girl between the age of childhood and womanhood:

"Beholding thee, Oh darling one, all white in thy azure dress, I thought of some figure of the Madonna robed in a shred of pure blue sky.

"I dreamed of those beautiful figures of saints whom one used to see in olden times smiling in the stained glass of church windows, and pointing upward to Paradise.

"And I could have wished to adore you alone upon my bended knees in some far hidden retreat, away from the frivolous world that passed between us."

This little bit of ecstasy over the beauty and purity of a child is pretty, but not particularly original. However, it

is only an introduction. Now comes the pretty part of the poem:

Soudain un caprice bizarre
Change la scène et le décor,
Et mon esprit au loin s'égare
Sur des grands prés d'azure et d'or.

Ou, près de ruisseaux muscules
Gazouillants comme des oiseaux,
Se poursuivent les libellules,
Ces fleurs vivantes des roseaux.

Enfant, n'es tu pas l'une d' elles
Qui me poursuit pour consoler?
Vainement tu caches tes ailes;
Tu marches, mais tu sais voler.

Petite fée au bleu corsage,
Que j'ai connu dès mon berceau,
En revoyant ton doux visage,
Je pense aux joncs de mon ruisseau!

Veux-tu qu'en amoureux fidèles
Nous revenions dans ces prés verts?
Libellule, reprends tes ailes;
Moi, je brulerai tous mes vers!

Et nous irons, sous la lumière,
D'un ciel plus frais et plus léger
Chacun dans sa forme première,
Moi courir, et toi voltiger.

"Suddenly a strange fancy changes for me the scene and the scenery; and my mind wanders far away over great meadows of azure and gold.

"Where hard by tiny streams that murmur with a sound like voices of little birds, the dragon-flies, those living flowers of the reeds, chase each other at play.

"Child, art thou not one of those dragon-flies, following after me to console me? Ah, it is in vain that thou tryest

to hide thy wings; thou dost walk, indeed, but well thou knowest how to fly!

"O little fairy with the blue corsage whom I knew even from the time I was a baby in the cradle; seeing again thy sweet face, I think of the rushes that border the little stream of my native village!

"Dost thou not wish that even now as faithful lovers we return to those green fields? O dragon-fly, take thy wings again, and I—I will burn all my poetry,

"And we shall go back, under the light of the sky more fresh and pure than this, each of us in the original form—I to run about, and thou to hover in the air as of yore."

The sight of a child's face has revived for the poet very suddenly and vividly, the recollection of the village home, the green fields of childhood, the little stream where he used to play with the same little girl, sometimes running after the dragon-fly. And now the queer fancy comes to him that she herself is so like a dragon-fly—so light, graceful, spiritual! Perhaps really she is a dragon-fly following him into the great city, where he struggles to live as a poet, just in order to console him. She hides her wings, but that is only to prevent other people knowing. Why not return once more to the home of childhood, back to the green fields and the sun? "Little dragon-fly," he says to her, "let us go back! do you return to your beautiful summer shape, be a dragon-fly again, expand your wings of gauze; and I shall stop trying to write poetry. I shall burn my verses; I shall go back to the streams where we played as children; I shall run about again with the joy of a child, and with you beautifully flitting hither and thither as a dragon-fly."

Victor Hugo also has a little poem about a dragon-fly, symbolic only, but quite pretty. It is entitled "La Demoiselle"; and the other poem was entitled, as you remember, "Ma Libellule." Both words mean a dragon-fly, but not the same kind of dragon-fly. The French word "demoiselle," which might be adequately rendered into Japanese by

the term "ojosan," refers only to those exquisitely slender, graceful, slow-flitting dragon-flies known to the scientist by the name of Calopteryx. Of course you know the difference by sight, and the reason of the French name will be poetically apparent to you.

Quand la demoiselle dorée
S'envole au départ des hivers,
Souvent sa robe diaprée,
Souvent sa aile est déchirée
Aux mille dards des buissons verts.

Ainsi, jeunesse vive et frêle,
Qui, t'égarant de tous côtés,
Voles ou ton instinct t'appele,
Souvent tu déchires ton aile
Aux épines des voluptés.

"When, at the departure of winter, the gilded dragon-fly begins to soar, often her many coloured robe, often her wing, is torn by the thousand thorns of the verdant shrubs.

"Even so, O frail and joyous Youth, who, wandering hither and thither, in every direction, flyest wherever thy instinct calls thee—even so thou dost often tear thy wings upon the thorns of pleasure."

You must understand that pleasure is compared to a rose-bush, whose beautiful and fragrant flowers attract the insects, but whose thorns are dangerous to the visitors. However, Victor Hugo does not use the word for rose-bush, for obvious reasons; nor does he qualify the plants which are said to tear the wings of the dragon-fly. I need hardly tell you that the comparison would not hold good in reference to the attraction of flowers, because dragon-flies do not care in the least about flowers, and if they happen to tear their wings among thorn bushes, it is much more likely to be in their attempt to capture and devour other insects. The merit of the poem is chiefly in its music and colour; as natural history it would not bear criticism. The most beauti-

ful modern French poem about insects, beautiful because of its classical perfection, is I think a sonnet by Heredia, entitled "Épigramme Funeraire"—that is to say, "Inscription for a Tombstone." This is an exact imitation of Greek sentiment and expression, carefully studied after the poets of the anthology. Several such Greek poems are extant, recounting how children mourned for pet insects which had died in spite of all their care. The most celebrated one among these I quoted in a former lecture—the poem about the little Greek girl Myro who made a tomb for her grasshopper and cried over it. Heredia has very well copied the Greek feeling in this fine sonnet:

Ici gît, Etranger, la verte sauterelle
Que durant deux saisons nourrit la jeune Hellé,
Et dont l'aile vibrant sous le pied dentelé
Bruissait dans le pin, le cytise, ou l'airelle.

Elle s'est tué, hélas! la lyre naturelle,
La muse des guérets, des sillons et du blé;
De peur que son léger sommeil ne soit troublé,
Ah, passe vite, ami, ne pèse point sur elle!

C'est là, Blanche, au milieu d'une touffe de thym,
Sa pierre funéraire est fraîchement posée.
Que d' hommes n'ont pas eu ce suprême destin!

Des larmes d' un enfant la tombe est arrosée,
Et l' Aurore pieuse y fait chaque matin
Une libation de gouttes de rosée.

"Stranger, here reposes the green grasshopper that the young girl Helle cared for during two seasons,—the grasshopper whose wings, vibrating under the strokes of its serrated feet, used to resound in the pine, the trefoil and the whortle-berry.

"She is silent now, alas! that natural lyre, muse of the unsown fields, of the furrows, and of the wheat. Lest her

light sleep should be disturbed, ah! pass quickly friend! do not be heavy upon her.

"It is there. All white, in the midst of a tuft of thyme her funeral monument is placed, in cool shadow; how many men have not been able to have this supremely happy end!

"By the tears of a child the insect's tomb is watered; and the pious goddess of dawn each morning there makes a libation of drops of dew."

This reads very imperfectly in a hasty translation; the original charm is due to the perfect art of the form. But the whole thing, as I have said before, is really Greek, and based upon a close study of several little Greek poems on the same kind of subject. Little Greek girls thousands of years ago used to keep singing insects as pets, every day feeding them with slices of leek and with fresh water, putting in their little cages sprigs of the plants which they liked. The sorrow of the child for the inevitable death of her insect pets at the approach of winter, seems to have inspired many Greek poets. With all tenderness, the child would make a small grave for the insect, bury it solemnly, and put a little white stone above the place to imitate a grave-stone. But of course she would want an inscription for this tomb-stone—perhaps would ask some of her grown-up friends to compose one for her. Sometimes the grown-up friend might be a poet, in which case he would compose an epitaph for all time.

I suppose you perceive that the solemnity of this imitation of the Greek poems on the subject is only a tender mockery, a playful sympathy with the real grief of the child. The expression, "pass, friend," is often found in Greek funeral inscriptions together with the injunction to tread lightly upon the dust of the dead. There is one French word to which I will call attention,—the word "guérets." We have no English equivalent for this term, said to be a corruption of the Latin word "veractum," and meaning fields which have been ploughed but not sown.

Not to dwell longer upon the phase of art indicated by this poem, I may turn to the subject of crickets. There are many French poems about crickets. One by Lamartine is known to almost every French child.

Grillon solitaire,
Ici comme moi,
Voix qui sors de terre,
Ah! réveille-toi!
J'attise la flamme,
C'est pour t'égayer;
Mais il manque une ame
Une ame au foyer.

Grillon solitaire,
Voix qui sors de terre,
Ah! réveille-toi
Pour moi.

Quand j'étais petite
Comme ce berceau,
Et que Marguerite
Filait son fuseau,
Quand le vent d'automne
Faisait tout gémir,
Ton cri monotone
M'aidait a dormir.

Grillon solitaire,
Voix qui sors de terre,
Ah! réveille-toi
Pour moi.

Seize fois l'anné
A compté mes jeurs;
Dans la cheminée
Je t'écoute encore
Aux froides saisons,
Souvenir sonore
Des vieilles maisons.

Grillon solitaire,
Voix qui sors de terre,
Ah! réveille-toi
Pour moi.

It is a young girl who thus addresses the cricket of the hearth, the house cricket. It is very common in country houses in Europe. This is what she says:

"Little solitary cricket, all alone here just like myself, little voice that comes up out of the ground, ah, awake for my sake! I am stirring up the fires, that is just to make you comfortable; but there lacks a presence by the hearth; a soul to keep me company.

"When I was a very little girl, as little as that cradle in the corner of the room, then, while Margaret our servant sat there spinning, and while the autumn wind made everything moan outside, your monotonous cry used to help me to fall asleep.

"Solitary cricket, voice that issues from the ground, awaken, for my sake.

"Now I am sixteen years of age and you are still nestling in the chimneys as of old. I can hear you still in the cold season,—like a sound—memory,—a sonorous memory of old houses.

"Solitary cricket, voice that issues from the ground, awaken, O awaken for my sake."

I do not think this pretty little song needs any explanation; I would only call your attention to the natural truth of the fancy and the feeling. Sitting alone by the fire in the night, the maiden wants to hear the cricket sing, because it makes her think of her childhood, and she finds happiness in remembering it.

So far as mere art goes, the poem of Gautier on the cricket is very much finer than the poem of Lamartine, though not so natural and pleasing. But as Gautier was the greatest master of French verse in the nineteenth century, not excepting Victor Hugo, I think that one example of his poetry on

insects may be of interest. He was very poor, compared with Victor Hugo; and he had to make his living by writing for newspapers, so that he had no time to become the great poet that nature intended him to be. However, he did find time to produce one volume of highly finished poetry, which is probably the most perfect verse of the nineteenth century, if not the most perfect verse ever made by a French poet; I mean the "Émaux et Camées." But the little poem which I am going to read to you is not from the "Émaux et Camées."

Souffle, bise! Tombe à flots, pluie!
Dans mons palais tout noir de suie
Je ris de la pluie et du vent;
En attendant que l'hiver fuie,
Je reste au coin du feu, rêvant.

C'est moi qui suis l'esprit de l'âtre!
Le gaz, de sa langue bleuâtre,
Lèche plus doucement le bois.
La fumée en filet d'albâtre,
Monte et se contourne à ma voix.

La bouilloire rit et babille;
La flamme aux pieds d'argent sautille
En accompagnant ma chanson;
La bûche de duvet s'habille;
La séve bout dans le tison.
. . . . . .

Pendant la nuit et la journée
Je chante sous la cheminée;
Dans mon langage de grillon,
J'ai, des rebuts de son aînée,
Souvent consolé Cendrillon.
. . . . . .

Quel plaisir! Prolonger sa veille,
Regarder la flamme vermeille
Prenant à deux bras le tison,
A tous les bruits preter l'oreille,
Entendre vivre la maison.

Tapi dans sa niche bien chaude,
Sentir l'hiver qui pleure et rôde,
Tout blême, et le nez violet,
Tâchant de s'introduire en fraude
Par quelque fente du volet!

This poem is especially picturesque, and is intended to give us the comfortable sensations of a winter night by the fire, and the amusement of watching the wood burn and of hearing the kettle boiling. You will find that the French has a particular quality of lucid expression; it is full of clearness and colour.

"Blow on, cold wind! pour down, O rain. I, in my soot-black palace laugh at both rain and wind; and while waiting for winter to pass I remain in my corner by the fire dreaming.

"It is I that am really the spirit of the hearth! The gaseous flame licks the wood more softly with its bluish tongue when it hears me; and the smoke rises up like an alabaster thread, and curls itself about (or twists) at the sound of my voice.

"The kettle chuckles and chatters; the golden-footed flame leaps, dancing to the accompaniment of my song (or in accompaniment to my song); the great log covers itself with down, the sap boils in the wooden embers ("duvet," meaning "down," refers to the soft fluffy white ash that forms upon the surface of burning wood).

"All night and all day I sing below the chimney. Often in my cricket-language, I have consoled Cinderella for the snubs of her elder sister.

"Ah, what pleasure to sit up at night, and watch the crimson flames embracing the wood (or hugging the wood) with both arms at once, and to listen to all the sounds, and to hear the life of the house!

"Nestling in one's good warm nook, how pleasant to hear Winter, who weeps and prowls round about the house out-

side, all wan and blue-nosed with cold, trying to smuggle itself inside some chink in the shutter!"

Of course this does not give us much about the insect itself, which remains invisible in the poem, just as it really remains invisible in the house where the voice is heard. Rather does the poem express the feelings of the person who hears the cricket.

When we come to the subject of grasshoppers, I think that the French poets have done much better than the English. There are many poems on the field grasshopper; I scarcely know which to quote first. But I think you would be pleased with a little composition by the celebrated French painter, Jules Breton. Like Rossetti he was both painter and poet; and in both arts he took for his subjects by preference things from country life. This little poem is entitled "Les Cigales." The word "cigales," though really identical with our word "cicala," seldom means the same thing. Indeed the French word may mean several different kinds of insects, and it is only by studying the text that we can feel quite sure what sort of insect is meant.

Lorsque dans l'herbe mûre aucun épi ne bouge,
Qu'à l'ardeur des rayons crépite le frement,
Que le coquelicot tombe languissament
Sous le faible fardeau de sa corolle rouge,

Tous les oiseaux de l'air ont fait taire leur chants;
Les ramiers paresseux, au plus noir des ramures,
Somnolents, dans les bois, ont cessé leurs murmures
Loin du soleil muet incendiant les champs.

Dans le blé, cependant, d'intrepides cigales
Jetant leurs mille bruits, fanfare de l'été,
Ont frénétiquement et sans trève agité
Leurs ailes sur l'airaine de leurs folles cymbales.

Trémoussantes, deboutes sur les longs épis d'or,
Virtuoses qui vont s'éteindre avant l'automne,

Elles poussent au ciel leur hymne monotone
Que dans l'ombre des nuits retentisse encore.

Et rien n'arrêtera leurs cris intarissables;
Quand on les chassera de l'avoine et des blés.
Elles émigreront sur les buissons brulés
Qui se meurent de soif dans les deserts de sable.

Sur l'arbuste effeuillé, sur les chardons flétris
Qui laissent s'envoler leur blanche chevelure,
On reverra l'insecte à la forte encolure,
Pleine d'ivresse, toujours s'exalter dans ses cris.

Jusqu'a ce qu' ouvrant l'aile en lambeaux arrachée,
Exasperé, brulant d'un feu toujours plus pur,
Son oeil de bronze fixe et tendu vers l'azur,
Il expire en chantant sur la tige séchée.

For the word "encolure" we have no English equivalent; it means the line of the neck and shoulder—sometimes the general appearance or shape of the body.

"When in the ripening grain field not a single ear of wheat moves; when in the beaming heat the corn seems to crackle; when the poppy languishes and bends down under the feeble burden of its scarlet corolla,

"Then all the birds of the air have hushed their songs; even the indolent doves, seeking the darkest part of the foliage in the tree, have become drowsy in the woods, and have ceased their cooing, far from the fields, which the silent sun is burning.

"Nevertheless, in the wheat, the brave grasshoppers uttering their thousand sounds, a trumpet flourish of summer, have continued furiously and unceasingly to smite their wings upon the brass of their wild cymbal.

"Quivering as they stand upon the long gold ears of the grain, master musicians who must die before the coming of Fall, they sound to heaven their monotonous hymn, which re-echoes even in the darkness of the night.

"And nothing will check their inexhaustible shrilling.

When chased away from the oats and from the wheat, they will migrate to the scorched bushes which die of thirst in the wastes of sand.

"Upon the leafless shrubs, upon the dried up thistles, which let their white hair fall and float away, there the sturdily-built insect can be seen again, filled with enthusiasm, ever more and more excited as he cries,

"Until, at last, opening his wings, now rent into shreds, exasperated, burning more and more fiercely in the frenzy of his excitement, and with his eyes of bronze always fixed motionlessly upon the azure sky, he dies in his song upon the withered grain."

This is difficult to translate at all satisfactorily, owing to the multitude of images compressed together. But the idea expressed is a fine one—the courage of the insect challenging the sun, and only chanting more and more as the heat and the thirst increase. The poem has, if you like, the fault of exaggeration, but the colour and music are very fine; and even the exaggeration itself has the merit of making the image more vivid.

It will not be necessary to quote another text; we shall scarcely have the time; but I want to translate to you something of another poem upon the same insect by the modern French poet Jean Aicard. In this poem, as in the little poem by Gautier, which I quoted to you, the writer puts his thought in the mouth of the insect, so to say—that is, makes the insect tell its own story.

"I am the impassive and noble insect that sings in the summer solstice from the dazzling dawn all the day long in the fragrant pine-wood. And my song is always the same, regular as the equal course of the season and of the sun. I am the speech of the hot and beaming sun, and when the reapers, weary of heaping the sheaves together, lie down in the lukewarm shade, and sleep and pant in the ardour of noonday—then more than at any other time do I utter freely and joyously that double-echoing strophe with which

my whole body vibrates. And when nothing else moves in all the land round about, I palpitate and loudly sound my little drum. Otherwise the sunlight triumphs; and in the whole landscape nothing is heard but my cry,—like the joy of the light itself.

"Like a butterfly I take up from the hearts of the flowers that pure water which the night lets fall into them like tears. I am inspired only by the almighty sun. Socrates listened to me; Virgil made mention of me. I am the insect especially beloved by the poets and by the bards. The ardent sun reflects himself in the globes of my eyes. My ruddy bed, which seems to be powdered like the surface of fine ripe fruit, resembles some exquisite key-board of silver and gold, all quivering with music. My four wings, with their delicate net-work of nerves, allow the bright down upon my black back to be seen through their transparency. And like a star upon the forehead of some divinely inspired poet, three exquisitely mounted rubies glitter upon my head."

These are fair examples of the French manner of treating the interesting subject of insects in poetry. If you should ask me whether the French poets are better than the English, I should answer, "In point of feeling, no." The real value of such examples to the student should be emotional, not descriptive. I think that the Japanese poems on insects, though not comparable in point of mere form with some of the foreign poems which I have quoted, are better in another way—they come nearer to the true essence of poetry. For the Japanese poets have taken the subject of insects chiefly for the purpose of suggesting human emotion; and that is certainly the way in which such a subject should be used. Remember that this is an age in which we are beginning to learn things about insects which could not have been even imagined fifty years ago, and the more that we learn about these miraculous creatures, the more difficult does it become for us to write poetically about their lives, or about their possible ways of thinking and feeling. Prob-

ably no mortal man will ever be able to imagine how insects think or feel or hear or even see. Not only are their senses totally different from those of animals, but they appear to have a variety of special senses about which we cannot know anything at all. As for their existence, it is full of facts so atrocious and so horrible as to realize most of the imaginations of old about the torments of hell. Now, for these reasons to make an insect speak in poetry—to put one's thoughts, so to speak, into the mouth of an insect—is no longer consistent with poetical good judgment. No; we must think of insects either in relation to the mystery of their marvellous lives, or in relation to the emotion which their sweet and melancholy music makes within our minds. The impressions produced by hearing the shrilling of crickets at night or by hearing the storm of cicadae in summer woods—those impressions indeed are admirable subjects for poetry, and will continue to be for all time.

When I lectured to you long ago about Greek and English poems on insects, I told you that nearly all the English poems on the subject were quite modern. I still believe that I was right in this statement, as a general assertion; but I have found one quaint poem about a grasshopper, which must have been written about the middle of the seventeenth century or, perhaps a little earlier. The date of the author's birth and death are respectively 1618 and 1658. His name, I think, you are familiar with—Richard Lovelace, author of many amatory poems, and of one especially famous song, "To Lucasta, on going to the Wars"—containing the celebrated stanza—

> Yet this inconstancy is such
> As you too shall adore;
> I could not love thee, Dear, so much,
> Loved I not honour more.

Well, as I said, this man wrote one pretty little poem on a grasshopper, which antedates most of the English poems on insects, if not all of them.

THE GRASSHOPPER

O Thou that swing'st upon the waving ear
  Of some well-filled oaten beard,
Drunk every night with a delicious tear
  Dropt thee from heaven, where now th'art rear'd!

The joys of earth and air are thine entire,
  That with thy feet and wings dost hop and fly;
And when thy poppy works, thou dost retire
  To thy carved acorn-bed to lie.

Up with the day, the Sun thou welcom'st then,
  Sport'st in the gilt plaits of his beams,
And all these merry days mak'st merry men
  Thyself, and melancholy streams.

A little artificial, this poem written at least two hundred and fifty years ago; but it is pretty in spite of its artifice. Some of the conceits are so quaint that they must be explained. By the term "oaten beard," the poet means an ear of oats; and you know that the grain of this plant is furnished with very long hair, so that many poets have spoken of the bearded oats. You may remember in this connection Tennyson's phrase "the bearded barley" in the "Lady of Shalott," and Longfellow's term "bearded grain" in his famous poem about the Reaper Death. When a person's beard is very thick, we say in England today "a full beard," but in the time of Shakespeare they used to say "a well filled beard"—hence the phrase in the second line of the first stanza.

In the third line the term "delicious tear" means dew,—which the Greeks called the tears of the night, and sometimes the tears of the dawn; and the phrase "drunk with dew" is quite Greek—so we may suspect that the author of this poem had been reading the Greek Anthology. In the third line of the second stanza the word "poppy" is used for sleep—a very common simile in Elizabethan times, be-

cause from the poppy flower was extracted the opiate which enables sick persons to sleep. The Greek authors spoke of poppy sleep. "And when thy poppy works," means, when the essence of sleep begins to operate upon you, or more simply, when you sleep. Perhaps the phrase about the "carved acorn-bed" may puzzle you; it is borrowed from the fairy-lore of Shakespeare's time, when fairies were said to sleep in little beds carved out of acorn shells; the simile is used only by way of calling the insect a fairy creature. In the second line of the third stanza you may notice the curious expression about the "gilt plaits" of the sun's beams. It was the custom in those days, as it still is in these, for young girls to plait their long hair; and the expression "gilt plaits" only means braided or plaited golden hair. This is perhaps a Greek conceit; for classic poets spoke of the golden hair of the Sun God as illuminating the world. I have said that the poem is a little artificial, but I think you will find it pretty, and even the whimsical similes are "precious" in the best sense.

CHAPTER XVI

NOTE UPON AN UGLY SUBJECT

THE ugly subject is the literature of hate.

Hitherto we have been chiefly and properly concerned with the literature of higher things—love, beauty, heroism, courage. Can there be a literature of ugliness?—or, is moral ugliness or any kind of ugliness a fit subject for art?

Do you know that this is a very hard question to answer in these days? The old Greeks would have answered it unqualifiedly. Perhaps that is the best way to answer it. We need not long discuss whether a single statue or a single picture of something merely ugly and foul ought to be made or not. The public judgment would answer such a question effectively. But it is very different if we ask whether there is any reason for representing the ugly figure in a general way. Drama at once furnishes us an answer. The figures of drama are horrible as well as beautiful, bad as well as good,—and the greater the dramatist, as a rule, the greater the evil in his bad character. In Shakespeare, for example, the dark side serves to make visible the bright side; evil is the shadow that brings out the brilliancy of the picture.

So there can be no dispute as to the place of the evil and the ugly in drama and in dramatic fiction. But it is quite another matter, when we have to consider an attempt to portray the ugliness and the evil all by itself. Is that right? Is it art? I do not think it is. But if I say that I do not think it is right, I am raising at once an endless and perfectly useless question about the moral purpose in art. If I were asked to give a reason why I do not think it is right to represent what is ugly in a statue or in a picture, I should be obliged to take refuge in an emotional expression of the feelings which the ugly arouses in me. So

that my argument would be reduced to something like this: "I do not like it, because it hurts my feelings, grates upon my nerves, spoils my pleasure in life." And that is only a personal argument. Not all people feel the same way. There was a Spanish painter who used to paint putrefied corpses, and he still has admirers.

Now the literature of satire mostly belongs to the ugly side of existence. When we were considering the history of eighteenth century literature, we were obliged to remark the cruelty and malignity which the literary men displayed in that age. They wrote, in the most perfect of verse, the most abominable things about each other; they very frequently slandered each other in a most shameful manner; with words they painted pictures of each other quite as horrible as those pictures of rotten corpses which the Spanish artist made. And, like that Spanish artist, they still have admirers. Students are obliged as a duty to read some of the eighteenth century satires; all the great critics admire them. Good old Dr. Johnson did not; he declared the most admired of them to be a useless display of malignity and jealousy. But people laugh at Dr. Johnson's moral judgment in these days. Much greater scholars than Dr. Johnson persist in praising many things that he condemned.

In the face of this high testimony to the value of the satirical literature of the eighteenth century, we cannot merely rely like Dr. Johnson upon our moral feelings. We must think about the matter—we must try to find a good clear reason for the praise given to wicked things cleverly said by men like Pope. Are we to praise clever wickedness? Have we any right to admire it? Or would not such admiration be proof that we are not particularly good ourselves?

The real answer to the problem can only be found by the perception of something in the wicked cleverness which is not wicked cleverness. Here excellence of verse forms

does not explain the matter at all. There must be something else—something that is not false but true. Now what is this thing?

It is truth in the delineation, not of a man, but of a type.

There is the secret of the admiration still given to some of the unjust and cruel satires of Pope and of his school. It is not because the satires were true pictures or caricatures of any living person in particular, but because they were true pictures of general types of human weakness which have always existed, which exist today and which will exist tomorrow. By their general truth they lived, and for nothing else can they be admired. And, observe, whenever Pope's satires do not reflect something larger than personal hate, nobody admires him. It is only when the personal hate has given him eyes to see larger facts, that we may really praise the utterance of the hatred. No better example of the power to see a type and to fix that type need be quoted than the few lines of Pope's very best satire, the lines about Addison. I think you have read enough about Addison to know that Pope's picture of him was not true, that Pope himself afterwards acknowledged that it was not true, that Addison was a gentle, courteous, correct, and somewhat cold person, but not a hypocrite nor a sneak. Yet for a moment Pope suspecting him of a mean act, conceived a picture of hypocrisy and meanness, such as had never before been written, and he printed it. Let us read a few lines:

> Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
> Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne,
> View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
> And hate for arts that caused himself to rise;
> Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
> And, without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
> Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
> Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike;

Alike reserved to blame or to commend,
A timorous foe and a suspicious friend.

It does not matter who was intended by such piercing lines as these; every one feels in reading them that they are unimpeachably true, atrociously and mercilessly true, of a certain type of human nature that is as old as the history of civilization. It is not to be wondered at that the art of drawing so true a picture in a dozen lines should still be praised; it is not to be wondered at that certain lines have become household words and English idioms—for instance, the lines about damning with faint praise and about making other people sneer, without sneering yourself.

I think we can say that the artistic question is partly solved by such a quotation. If hatred gives new eyes to a man and enables him to see more general truth in a powerful way, the literature of hatred may be worthy of a certain kind of admiration. But I should certainly think that to shrink from all such literature is a proof of a generous mind.

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CHAPTER XVII

TOLSTOI'S THEORY OF ART

Last year I gave a short lecture in regard to a new theory of art, suggesting that the highest form of any kind of art ought to have the effect of exciting a noble enthusiasm and a sincere desire of self-sacrifice. I compared the ideal effect of such an art with the emotional effect of first love upon a generous mind, observing that the real influence of a generous passion is intensely moral, that it creates a desire to sacrifice self. But at that time I had not read Tolstoi's famous essay upon the very same subject. That essay reenforces a great many truths that I have tried to dwell upon in other lectures; and no book of the present time has excited so much furious discussion. So I think that it is quite important enough to talk about today. As university students it is necessary that you should be fully acquainted with what is going on in the literary world; and the appearance of Tolstoi's book (it first appeared only in the form of magazine essays) is a very great literary event. It is entitled in the French version, "*Qu'est ce que l'Art?*"

Before going any further, I must warn you not to allow yourselves to be prejudiced against the theory by anything in the way of criticism made upon it. One of the most important things for a literary student to learn is not to allow his judgment to be formed by other people's opinions. I have to lecture to you hoping that you will keep to this rule even in regard to my own opinion. Do not think that something is good or bad, merely because I say so, but try to find out for yourself by unprejudiced reading and thinking whether I am right or wrong. In the case of Tolstoi, the criticisms have been so fierce and in some respects so well founded, that even I hesitated for a moment to buy

the book. But I suspected very soon that any book capable of making half the world angry on the subject of art must be a book of great power. Indeed, it is rather a good sign that a man is worth something, when thousands of people abuse him simply for his opinions. And now, having read the book, I find that I was quite right in my reflections. It is a very great book, but you must be prepared for startling errors in it, extraordinary misjudgments, things that really deserve harsh criticism. Many great thinkers are as weak in some one direction as they happen to be strong in another. Ruskin, who could not really understand Greek art, and who resembled Tolstoi in many ways, was a man of this kind, inclined to abuse what he did not understand, Japanese art not less than Greek art. About Greek art one of his judgments clearly proves the limitation of his faculty. He said that the Venus de Medici was a very uninteresting little person. Tolstoi has said more extraordinary things than that; he has no liking for Shakespeare, for Dante, for other men whose fame has been established for centuries. He denies at once whole schools of literature, whole schools of painting and whole schools of music. If the wrong things which he has said were picked out of his book and printed on a page all by themselves (this has been done by some critics), you would think after reading that page that Tolstoi had become suddenly insane. But you must not mind these blemishes. Certain giants must never be judged by their errors, but only by their strength, and in spite of all faults the book is a book which will make anybody think in a new and generous way. Moreover, it is utterly sincere and unselfish—the author denouncing even his own work, the wonderful books of his youth, which won for him the very highest place among modern novelists. These, he now tells us, are not works of art.

There is a qualification to be made in regard to all this. Tolstoi does not deny that most art that he condemns is art

in a narrow sense; he means that it is not good art, not the best, and therefore ought not to be praised. This being understood, I can better begin to explain his doctrine.

The first position which he takes is about as follows: A great deal of what has been called great art can not be understood except by educated people. You must be educated and refined in a considerable degree, in order to understand the beauty of a Greek gem or statue, an elaborate piece of music, or a supreme piece of modern poetry. You must be trained to understand the beauty of what modern society calls beautiful. Take a peasant from the people, and show to him a great painting, or repeat to him a great poem, or make him listen to a grand piece of harmonized music; and then ask him what he thinks of these things. As a sincere man, he will tell you that he prefers to look at the picture in his village church, to hear the songs of beggar-minstrels, or to listen to a piece of dance music. This is unquestionable fact; nobody can deny it.

But the substance of a nation in any country, the mass of its humanity, is not cultured, is not rich, is not refined; it consists of peasants and workers, not of fine ladies and gentlemen. The cultivated class must always be small; the majority of a nation must always remain workers. And according to the common acceptation and practice of art, art is something which only the highly educated and wealthy can be made to understand and to enjoy. Therefore art is something with which nine-tenths at least, of the human race, can have nothing to do!

Yet what of the alleged inferiority of the masses? Are they really inferior beings, are they unsusceptible to the highest and best emotions? What are these highest and best emotions that artists talk so much about? Are they not loyalty, love, duty, resignation, patience, courage—everything that means the strength of the race and the goodness of it? Has the peasant no loyalty, no love, no courage, no patience, no patriotism? Or, rather is it not

the peasant who is most willing to give his life for his emperor and his country, to sacrifice himself for the sake of others, to do in time of danger the greatest deeds of heroism, to sacrifice himself in time of peace for the sake of others; to obey under all circumstances? Is it not the peasant really who loves most? Who is the best of husbands and fathers? Who, in all that makes religion worth having, is the most devout of believers? Tell the real truth, and acknowledge that the peasant is morally a better man than the average of the noble and wealthy. He is emotionally better, and he is better in the strength of his character. Where do we find what is called human goodness? Where are we to go to look for everyday examples of every virtue? Is it around the wealthy people of cities, or is it among the people of the country, the people who cannot understand art? There is only one answer to this question, and it is the same answer that Ruskin made a long time ago. The poor are as a whole the best people. If you want to look for holiness in the sense of human goodness, you must look for it among the poor. Everything noble in the emotional life is there. The evil devices and follies of a few do not signify; the great mass of the people are good.

Well, the great mass of the people have nothing to do with art, though they are good. But what is art? It is the power to convey emotion by means of words, music, colour or form; it is the means of making people feel truth and beauty through their senses. And the common people cannot understand art! Then must we suppose that they have no sense of truth and beauty? Have we not already been obliged to recognize that the best of human emotion belongs to them? And if the mass of the people really possess every noble emotion, and if our so-called art cannot touch their hearts and their minds, where is the fault? It cannot be in the people; it must be in the art.

This leads to another question—is it really true that what

we have been calling great art appeals to the best emotions of mankind? It cannot be true, Tolstoi boldly answers. If it were true, then the people would be touched by it. They are not touched by it; they do not understand it; they do not like it. That is proof positive that it does not appeal to noble emotions. Then what does it appeal to? At this point of the essay Tolstoi's criticism is most telling and most terrible, though weakened by occasional mistakes. What we have been calling art, he says, appeals to sensualism and lust; but the peasant is chaste. He does not care for pictures of naked women, nor statues of nudity in any form; neither does he care for stories or poems suggesting sensuality. Sensualism is really weakness; the perfectly strong man cannot be a sensualist—his life is too normal and too natural; if you like, he is too good an animal to be unchaste. Most animals are chaste. But Western art, Greek art, Italian art, French art, has been through all these centuries unchaste, appealing only to the sex-instincts of the beholder. There are exceptions, no doubt, but in this way of considering the meaning of art we must consider the dominant tone. I am afraid that Tolstoi is quite right about that. I do not think that any one can controvert him.

Next, let us take literature. The peasant cannot understand fine literature; it makes no appeal to him. He has a very simple literature of his own, full of beauty—touching songs and touching stories about human virtue, and our best critics acknowledge that any poet can obtain the best and truest inspiration from the literature of despised peasants. You cannot say that the peasant is incapable of feeling literary emotions—on the contrary, he can give it, he can teach it; in England he taught it to every English poet since the time of Walter Scott, and to many before that time. The very greatest of Scotch singers was a poor farmer. So we must acknowledge that a peasant is no stranger to the highest form of literary emotion. But our

fine literature, our literature of educated men, can not interest him at all. Therefore, the fault must be in the art, not in the peasant. So let us consider what is the nature of those noble emotions which our highest literary art is supposed to express and to teach.

Here again we have Tolstoi's terrible criticism. Our greatest plays are plays on the subject of crime, murder, lust, adultery, treachery, everything horrible in human nature. Our novels, for the great majority, are stories of social life written with a view to keeping the sexual feelings of the reader slightly excited. Our poems have been for hundreds of years, a great majority of them, about sexual love, or about a foolish passion of some kind. I am only expressing Tolstoi's view very briefly; it would surprise you to discover how he masses great names together in this condemnation, and how very right he seems to me to be in spite of it; and then he tells us, "You never can appeal to the honest mass of people, you never can touch their hearts, with stories of lust and crime and luxury. They are too good to find pleasure in such things."

I will not dwell upon his arraignment of modern music and other branches of art, because the above illustrations are strong enough. His conclusion is this: "If art be the means of expressing and conveying emotion, then the noblest art must be that which expresses and conveys the noblest form of emotion. Now the noblest emotions are emotions shared by all men; and true art should be able to appeal to all men, not to a class only. The proof that modern art is not great art, the proof that it is even bad art, is that the common people cannot understand it."

We now come face to face with two serious objections.

First, you may say that the reason common people can not understand great art is simply this, that they are stupid and ignorant. How can they comprehend a great work of literature when they can not understand the language of literature? They can read only very simple things; to read

a great poem or a great work of fiction requires a knowledge of the language of the educated. Common people, not being educated, of course cannot understand.

Very bravely does Tolstoi face this objection. He answers that the so-called language of the educated ought not to be used in a great work of art. A great work ought to be written in the language of the people, which is really the language of the country and of the nation, whereas the language of the educated is a special artificial thing, like the language of medicine, the language of botany, or the language of any special science. And he tells us that he thinks it selfish and wicked and unreasonable to make literature inaccessible to the people by writing it in a special idiom which the people can not understand. Moreover, he says that the greatest books of the world have never been written in a special literary language, but in the common language of the common people. To illustrate this he quotes the great religious books and great religious poems, the Bible and the books of Buddhism which, in the time of their composition, must have been produced in the living tongue, not in a special language. What reason can possibly be offered except a reason of prejudice for making literature incomprehensible to the masses? It is no use to say that with common language you can not express the same ideas which you are in the habit of expressing through literary language. If you think you can not utter great thoughts in simple speech, that is because of bad training, bad habits, false education. The greatest thoughts and the deepest ever uttered, have been written in religious books and in the language of the people. In short, Tolstoi's position is that the whole system of literary education is wrong from top to bottom. And this statement is worth thinking about.

Let me give you a quotation, showing his views about the incomprehensibility of art:

"To say that a work of art is good, and that it is never-

theless incomprehensible to the majority of men, is just as if one were to say of a certain kind of food that it is good, but that the majority of mankind ought to be careful not to eat it. The majority of men, doubtless, may not like to eat rotten cheese or what is called in England 'high' game—that is, the flesh of game which has been allowed to become a little putrid—meat much esteemed by men of perverted taste; but bread and fruits are only good when they please the taste of the majority of mankind. And in the case of art it is just the same thing. Perverted art cannot please the majority of mankind; but good art should of necessity be something capable of pleasing everybody."

Now let me give you an interesting quotation which illustrates the degree to which what is now called great art seems unnatural to common people:

"Among people who have not yet become perverted by the false theories of our modern society, among artisans and among children, for example, nature has created a very clear idea of what deserves to be blamed or to be praised. According to the instincts of the common people and of children, praise rightly belongs only to great physical force" —as in the case of Hercules, of heroes, of conquerors—"or else to moral force"—as in the case of Sakya-Muni, renouncing beauty and power for the sake of saving man, or the case of Christ dying upon the Cross for our benefit, or as in the case of the saints and the martyrs. These ideas are ideas of the most perfect kind. Simple and frankly honest souls understand very well that it is impossible not to respect physical force, because physical force is a thing that of itself compels respect; and they also can not help equally respecting moral force—the moral strength of the man who works for the sake of good; they feel themselves attracted toward the beauty of moral force by their whole inner nature. "These simple minds perceive that there actually exist in this world men who are more respected than the men respected for physical or moral force—they perceive

that there are men more respected, more admired, and better rewarded than all the heroes of strength or of moral good, and this merely because they know how to sing, how to dance, or how to write poems. A peasant can understand that Alexander the Great or Genghis Khan or Napoleon were really great men; he understands that because he knows that any one of them would have been able to annihilate him and thousands of his followers. He can also understand that Buddha, Socrates, and Christ were great men, because he feels and knows that he himself and all other men ought to try to be like them. But how is it that a man can be called great merely for having written poems about the love of woman? That is a thing which, by no manner of means, could he ever be made to understand."

Elsewhere he gives a still more amusing illustration. The common people, he says, are accustomed to look at statues of divinities, angels, saints, gods, or heroes. They understand quite well the reason for such images. But when they hear that a statue has been set up to honour a man like Baudelaire, who wrote poems of lust or despair, or when they hear of a statue set up in memory of a man who knew how to play the fiddle, that appears to them utterly monstrous. And perhaps it is.

I have thought of a second strong objection to Tolstoi's position, an objection which he himself has not dwelt on—a philosophical objection. It is customary now-a-days to consider superior intelligence as connected with a superior nervous system. Many persons, I am sure, would be ready to say that the common people cannot understand high art, because of the inferiority of their nervous system. Compared with educated and wealthy people, they are supposed to be dull, therefore incapable of feeling beauty. They live, in Europe at least, among miserable conditions of dirt and bad smells. How could they appreciate the delicate fine art of civilization? I say that many persons would argue in this way, but no clear thinker would do so. As

a matter of fact, in modern Europe the best thinkers, the best artists, the best scholars, really come from the peasant class. Some farmers have been able with the greatest difficulty to give their children a better education than the average. Even in the great English universities some of the highest honours have been taken by men of this kind, proving as Spencer said long ago that the foundation of a strong mind is a strong body. I know what Tolstoi would say about the aesthetic refinement of the nervous system. He would simply say that what is called exquisite nervous sensibility is nothing more than hyper-aesthesia—that is, a diseased condition of the nerves. But leaving this matter aside, let me seriously ask a question. Is a common peasant of the poorest class really insensible to beauty? Or what kind of beauty shall we take for a test? The European standard of art holds the perception of human beauty to be the highest test-mark of aesthetic ability. Is the common man, the most common and ignorant man of the people, insensible to human beauty? Is he less capable, for example, of judging the beauty of woman than the most accomplished of artists? Now I do not know what you will think of my statement; but I do not hesitate for a moment to say that the best judge of beauty in the world is the common man of the people. I do not mean that every man of that class is better than others; but I mean that the quickest and best judges of either a man or a woman are the very same persons who are the quickest and best judges of a horse or a cow.

For after all, what we call beauty or grace in the best and deepest sense, represents physical force, with which the peasant is much better acquainted than we are. He is accustomed to observing life, and he does it instinctively. Beauty means a certain proportion in the skeleton which gives the best results of strength and of easy motion in the animal or the man. Suppose again that we consider the body apart from beauty; what does it mean? It means the

economy of force; that is, a body should be so made that the greatest possible amount of strength and activity is obtained with the least possible amount of substance. To say that a man accustomed to judge an animal cannot judge a human being is utter nonsense. Such a man, in fact, is the best of all judges, and seldom makes a mistake. Now history of course has curious instances of the recognition of this fact by great princes. In the time of the greatest luxury of the Caliphs of Bagdad, when the Prince wished to find a perfectly beautiful woman to be his companion, he did not invariably go to the governors of provinces or to the houses of the nobility in search of such a woman. He went to the wild Arabs of the desert, to the breeders of horses, and asked them to find the girl for him. A memorable example is that of Abdul Malik, the fifth Caliph of the house of Ommayad; he asked a common horse trader how to choose a beautiful woman, and the man at once answered him, "You must choose a woman whose feet are of such a form, etc."—naming and describing every part of the body and its best points exactly as a horse-trader would describe the best points of a horse. The Caliph was astonished to discover that this rude man knew incomparably more about womanly beauty than all his courtiers and his artists. The fact is that familiarity with life, with active life, gives the best of all knowledge in the matter of beauty and strength. Once in America I had a curious illustration of what such familiarity can accomplish in another way. At a certain meeting of men from many parts of the country, there came into the assembly a common man of the poorest class who could tell the exact weight of any one in the assembly. You must remember that every man was fully dressed. All agreed to pay him something for proof of his skill, for it is very difficult to tell the weight and strength of a man in Western clothes. Well, the man took a little box, put it on the ground, and asked each person present to step over it. As each person stepped, he cried out the

weight; and the weight was almost exactly as announced in every case. Afterwards I asked him how he did this extraordinary thing. He answered, "When you lift your leg to step over the box, I can see the size and the line of the front muscle of the thigh, and from that I can tell any man's weight." There is a good example of what natural observation means.

But to return, in conclusion, to the subject of this essay. I think it will give you something to think about; and certainly it confirms the truth of one thing which I have often asserted, that the sooner Japanese authors will resign themselves to write in the spoken language of the people, the better for Japanese literature and for the general dissemination of modern knowledge. I think this book is a very great and noble book; I also think that it is fundamentally true from beginning to end. There are mistakes in it—as, for instance, when Tolstoi speaks of Kipling as an essentially obscure writer, incomprehensible to the people. But Kipling happens to be just the man who speaks to the people. He uses their vernacular. Such little mistakes, due to an imperfect knowledge of a foreign people, do not in the least affect the value of the moral in this teaching. But the reforms advised are at present, of course, impossible. Although I believe Tolstoi is perfectly right, I could not lecture to you—I could not fulfil my duties in this university—by strictly observing his principles. Were I to do that, I should be obliged to tell you that hundreds of books famous in English literature are essentially bad books, and that you ought not to read them at all; whereas I am engaged for the purpose of pointing out to you the literary merits of those very books.

CHAPTER XVIII

NOTE UPON TOLSTOI'S "RESURRECTION"

Before commencing another lecture on texts of any kind, we may relieve the monotony by a little talk about a wonderful book which all the world is talking about at the present time. Besides giving you special lectures on individual authors, I believe that it is also the lecturer's duty to talk to you occasionally about the great literary events of our own day—at least about such of them as appear to have any important moral or social signification. It is well that you should accustom yourselves during your university career to watch such literary events, and to make fairly correct estimates and judgments in regard to them, remembering that the thought of the future is made by the events of the present—in literary circles, at least.

In a preceding lecture on a book by Meredith, I insisted at some length upon the difficulty to be faced by every reformer—one might have added, by any man with a novel idea. Men of new ideas usually get into trouble. It is also possible to get into trouble by returning to ideas which are very old, but which being true, may be in antagonism to the notions of the time or to the existing tendencies in society. Count Tolstoi is an example of the latter fact. I spoke of him in a former lecture, regarding his great power as a novelist, but I was then referring to the work of his youth particularly. I want now to speak of the work of his old age. You will do well to remember that next to Turgueniev, he represents the highest literary art of Russia; and I am not sure but that he will eventually be judged even greater than Turgueniev. And speaking of Russian prose literature, remember that although small in quantity, its quality has not been surpassed by any other literature,

not even by the French. I do not mean to say that the Russian writers are masters of form as the French are; they cannot be that. But in the art of picturing human life, so as to bestir the best emotions of the reader, they really stand almost alone.

In his later years you know that the Count became very religious in his own way. He made a sort of Christianity of his own—a poetical kind of Christianity, which consisted in applying the teachings of Christ to the conduct of actual life. Perhaps you have read or heard that there are now in Russia a great many strange sects of Christians, who are giving the Government more trouble than the English and American Quakers gave to their respective governments in former centuries. You know what the Russian government is, and you know what it means there for a man to say, I am an anti-militarist. But there are thousands of men who persist in saying that to their government in Russia, year after year, and welcoming the punishment which follows. They believe that it is not Christian to declare war, to destroy life, and to wound others. And really the government can not do anything with these men except to punish them. Thousands have been driven out of the country, but the number of sects continues to grow. This will give you an idea, but only a very small idea, regarding the new kind of Christianity existing in Russia. The brave author I am speaking of does not belong to the particular sects mentioned, though he has sympathy with them. He is a sect in himself. He has given away all his property to help the peasants who were formerly slaves upon his father's estate, and he has even written books of late years in order to devote the money obtained from their sale to charitable purposes. When he first began to abandon literature, many years ago, the great Turgueniev wrote to him and begged him, for the sake of Russian literature, to go back to fiction. For he has this one faculty to a greater extent than Turgueniev had, than almost any modern writer

had—the dramatic faculty, the power to make hundreds of different characters really think and move and speak in the pages of a book. But he did not give any heed to this generous advice at the time. Afterwards he wrote chiefly little short stories intended to illustrate moral facts. But now he has certainly returned to fiction, because he discovered that he had something new to say; and the result is really very astonishing. I should not declare that his last book is a greater piece of literary work than the novels of his young days; I should simply say that it is one of the most terrible and touching books ever written. Nothing else at all resembling it appeared during the century. In one sense you may call it a religious novel, but actually it is not a religious novel at all in relation to dogma or doctrine of any kind. It is simply the story of the influence of generous ideas upon the mind of a man who has done something wrong. The word "religious" concerns it only in the sense that moral feeling is religion. The result of writing that book is that Count Tolstoi has been excommunicated by the Orthodox Church as a blasphemer and an infidel, as one who is not to be allowed the privilege of religious believers after his death, and as one for whose soul men are hereafter forbidden to pray. You will see that in Russia, at least, literature is not by any means free from religious interference as well as secular censorship. But really the offence of Count Tolstoi's book only happens to be that it is more Christian than Christianity. To try to improve a religious conception may be quite as dangerous socially as to attack it.

What is the subject of the novel? A young Russian nobleman, while still a university student, thoughtlessly seduces a servant girl in the house of his mother. He gives her a child. Afterwards he thinks that, as he is a nobleman, it is quite sufficient compensation for him to give her a present of one hundred rubles. Then he loses sight of her for a number of years, during which time he enjoys all

the pleasures of life as much as possible and becomes as selfish and as hard as any other man of the world. Later on he is summoned one day to the criminal court as a juryman in order to decide upon the guilt or innocence of a prostitute who has been accused of murdering a man, or at least of poisoning him, for purposes of robbery. The woman is very beautiful; and her face immediately attracts the young nobleman's attention. Then what is his surprise to find that this is the same girl whom he had seduced years before in his mother's house. It was his fault that instead of becoming a happy wife she had become what he now saw before him. The accusation brought against her happened to be false, and he knows from positive evidence that it is a false charge, but the machinery of the Russian criminal court is still very imperfect, and he cannot obtain the acquittal of the woman. Although she is innocent, she is sentenced to Siberia.

Then as he heard the sentence he began to understand what the result of his own moral injustice to the girl had been—the total ruin of a life, the destruction of body and soul. And why had he done this? For mere selfish pleasure. Can he possibly atone for the wrong?

In one way he can partly atone to her. His moral duty now is, notwithstanding that he is a high nobleman and that she has become a public prostitute, convicted of murder—it is now his duty, he thinks, to go with her to Siberia, and to marry her, and to devote the rest of his life to the work of trying to make her a good woman.

Perhaps the element of the improbable will seem to some of you who have not read the book, to obtrude itself in this relation. Is it not a little absurd to imagine a nobleman thus willing to disgrace himself for a moral purpose which the nineteenth century can have no sympathy with, so far as society is concerned? In this country, perhaps the story seems almost unnatural; but it is not in the least unnatural to European readers. In fact, the eccentricities of English

noblemen have furnished parallels in points of strangeness within the memory of living men. A generous nature, profoundly sympathetic, moved to remorse by the fullest recognition of the consequences of a fault, and, moreover, religious in the best sense, would certainly be capable of attempting what the novelist describes. A good heart is capable of any sacrifice. But when you read the story, especially if you read it in the French translation, which is much superior in many respects to the English, you will have another reason to feel that the story is not improbable. I mean the recognition of the fact that it is not simply a story, but the record of a personal experience. The man who wrote that book did not imagine it; he saw and felt all that he narrates; he is telling us the history of his own faults and of his own efforts to atone for them.

One of the fine things said in an early chapter of the book, is that nobody who injures another human being can possibly learn the extent of that injury until he attempts to make compensation. The young nobleman of the novel encounters this truth from the start, learns with surprise the force and depth of it. It is all very well to be willing to do what is right, but the doing is not nearly so easy a matter as might be supposed. It looks a very simple thing to go to the woman, and to say to her, "Forgive me; be my wife; I am rich and influential, I can protect and make you happy." But when the man actually does this, he discovers that he is fighting against all society, all laws. He has, as a wrong-doer, been, without knowing it, working as a part of the great social machinery that crushes the weak for the benefit of the strong. Every seducer really helps the cruel and brutal forces of society by his treacheries. He is working for all that is selfish and bad in society. Society helps him to do the wrong, and afterwards it helps him to crush the victim into the silence and the obscurity of hopeless misery. But it will not help him to undo the wrong. Not at all. When he tries to do that,

society turns upon him in the name of morality and in the name of common sense. He becomes then, for society, an enemy, a fool, a person no longer worthy of common respect.

So when the nobleman tries to rescue the woman from her unhappy position, the world simply laughs at him, the law opposes him, and his friends regard him with scorn as one who would shamelessly disgrace the society to which he belongs. Even those officials who might be willing to help him, do not at all understand his motives. His only sympathizers are those who imagine that he is actuated by sensual passion; and it requires no little courage on his part to bear this variety of misapprehensions. And he has to bear it in extraordinary places under the most extraordinary circumstances. He is obliged to go to the officials of the prison and to explain to them that he wants to marry that woman who has been accused of murder; he must tell them also who he is—a prince, disgracing the race from which he sprang. He must associate with convicts and felons in the prisons, and submit to the horrible conditions there prevailing. He must bear every variety of insult. And, after all, the woman for whose sake he bears all this, utterly despises him—reproaches him, mocks him, refuses his help. All that he can hope for is to soften her resentment by patience and kindness. So he follows her to Siberia. He actually succeeds in having her sentence remitted, and sets her free from the prison. But then she refuses to marry him, and marries another man. That is the whole of the story in brief. The wonderful art is the analysis of the emotions of its characters, and the strange illustration which it affords of the possible result of a single selfish act, and of the tremendous difficulty in the way of repairing that act. There are several hundred figures in the story—real living figures—which must have been studies from life, and which are so very human that the reader forgets that he is reading about Russia. Characters are of the very same kind in every land. One cannot help thinking what

a great dramatist Tolstoi might have been had he taken to that branch of literature.

So much for the literary facts of the book. That which has given offence is not concerned with the art of those pages. The offensive fact is that the author has dared to preach essentially the Christian doctrine—the doctrine of human love as held by the ancient Christians, and after a manner antagonistic to the modern doctrinal and political Christianity of Russia. The censors who could find in such a book a reason for his excommunication must have been, nevertheless, determined from the first upon that course. For the alleged chief cause of the sentence is that Tolstoi spoke of Jesus Christ as being "only a man." But though such be the doctrinal reason given, the resentment must have been caused by something else. And that something else was indeed a much more serious matter. It was nothing else than the manner in which the author shows that the great machinery of the Church is quite as often used to uphold injustice as to make for justice; and that there is, even among the aristocracy of the Church, a kind of political indifference to the essential duties of that Church. After all, the author has really effected his object better by getting excommunicated than he could have done in any other possible way.

In calling your attention to this very terrible and wonderful book, however, it is my duty as a follower of Spencer, to tell you that some of its social theories will not bear scientific consideration. In this respect the work is certainly defective. It is not true, for example, that the practice of perfect brotherly love throughout all classes of society —the abolishing of prisons, the abolition of criminal law— it is not true that any of these things are possible in the present state of humanity. Everywhere throughout the book we meet doubtful and startling half-truths—for example, the statement that most of the unhappiness of life is caused by approaching men for motives of interest only,

without sympathy and without love. If you can really love men and deal with them only in the loving spirit, the author tells us, you will not be unhappy; but if you mingle with men, and do not love them, if you do business with them without love, then the most frightful misfortunes will result. This sounds beautiful, and there is a good deal of truth in it, but by no means all the truth. The existing characters of men cannot be so changed, either by religious teaching or by education or law or by any other means, as to render such a policy of life even thinkable. And the book is full of utterances quite as remarkable and quite as illusive. But the defects which I have specified are after all, on the noble side; they do not really spoil the work in the least; and they make even men who cannot accept such teaching, who cannot help smiling at it, think in a generous way about matters which deserve the most careful consideration.

CHAPTER XIX

SOME POEMS ON DEATH

The term is drawing to a close and we shall hardly have time for any elaborate study; so I shall only attempt one more short lecture upon a special subject. Yesterday we were speaking of the classical and romantic spirit in poetry. It occurred to me that no subject could illustrate the differences of the two methods more forcibly than a selection of poems upon the subject of death. This, I need scarcely say, is the most serious of all subjects, naturally lending itself as an inspiration to the highest forms of sublime expression as well as to the most ordinary forms of simple pathos. It would seem to be especially fitted for classical treatment; indeed a majority of famous poems upon death are in classical form. The severe and constrained laws of classical composition would appear most suitable to a theme requiring solemnity and measured self-control. But I think that, opposite to almost any classical utterance upon this grim subject, I could place a romantic example that you would find much more touching and much more true to the real spirit of poetry. Let me now choose a couple of examples. The first I will take from Bryant's poem, "Thanatopsis," selected because it is perhaps more widely known than any other modern classical utterance which has achieved popularity in this relation. Bryant, you know, was an American poet, and he was almost the only American poet of real note who was frankly classical. Poe, Longfellow, Whittier, Emerson, Lowell,—these were all romanticists. Bryant has nothing of romance in his composition; but as a classic poet he was so far successful that some of his choice work now belongs to English literature as securely as almost anything done by any minor English poet. These are the lines to which I refer:

So live, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan, which moves
To that mysterious realm where each one takes
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
Like one that wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

These lines are beautiful in a cold way. They express a great religious and moral duty, in relation to death. The imagery has a certain grandeur, especially the dim picture of humanity passing from birth to death as a caravan passes over the surface of a desert. Now, "quarry slave" means a slave employed at cutting stone in a quarry. Formerly such slaves were treated like prisoners; they were beaten while at work, and beaten also on their march from their quarters to the place of labour and back again. Indeed, this is still the treatment of many slaves in Northern Africa under Arab or Moorish rule, and it is to such rule that the poet refers. His lesson is this: If you live well, you need not be afraid to die. Try to live such a good life that when death comes you can think of it merely as a man thinks of having a pleasant sleep. Wicked men, on the other hand, think of death as the slave thinks of his going and coming, with terror, under the lash of the master. The lesson is good, and consoling, but it is not particularly original; and the greatest merit of the composition is the well-sounding blank verse. Now this is exactly according to classical canons. The verse is sonorous, correct and cold. Perhaps classic verse ought to be in such cases a little cold. One must not show too much emotion, especially in treating any vast and solemn subject. I think you will admire the lines if you study them carefully; but I think you will admire much more a little thing, a very, very small thing, about a dead child, which I am going to

quote to you as an example of romantic methods. It is a mother's dream about her little dead boy. Perhaps this dream was inspired by an old superstition, common to many parts of Europe, that the tears of the living cause pain and sorrow to the dead. At all events it is a very natural little composition; and the poet is William Barnes, who wrote a great deal of touching poetry in the dialect of Dorsetshire. This poem is not in dialect, but it is not according to classical rules at all; it is almost colloquial in its form.

THE MOTHER'S DREAM

I'd a dream tonight
As I fell asleep,
Oh! the touching sight
Makes me still to weep;
Of my little lad,
Gone to leave me sad,
Aye, the child I had
But was not to keep.

As in heaven high
I my child did seek,
There, in train, came by
Children fair and meek,
Each in lily white,
With a lamp alight;
Each was clear to sight,
But they did not speak.

Then a little sad
Came my child in turn,
But the lamp he had
Oh! it did not burn.
He, to clear my doubt,
Said, half turned about,
"Your tears put it out;
Mother, never mourn."

Of course you may say of the comparison that it is not

quite fair,—that in the one case we have a cosmic and didactic idea, and in the other only an individual fancy. That is true. But were I to compare a classic fancy only with a romantic fancy you would probably find the contrast still more powerful. A cosmic idea reinforced by moral sentiment ought to produce an emotional thrill. Do Bryant's lines produce such a thrill? I do not think that they do. But the mother's dream does produce a thrill of purely natural emotion, and though you may forget the words of the poem, you can not forget the fancy. On the other hand, if you forget the actual words of Bryant's composition there is very little left to think about. The images are grand, but they are indistinct and dark and leave no impression upon the memory. Classical verse depends upon form; the essence of romantic verse may be independent of form. Probably no fervent believer in classic rules would agree with the poet in his choice of a five-syllable measure,—a very primitive measure indeed. Yet where there is true poetic feeling, the measure is a matter of secondary importance.

Can we mix the two systems together? Can we make a poem at once romantic and classic? Certainly, but it requires a particular emotional character to do this well. Very few succeed in it. However, on this very subject of death I have a little poem by one of Tennyson's brothers, Charles Tennyson Turner. Here is a poem not only upon a very solemn subject, but even somewhat religious into the bargain, and written by a clergyman, and put into the severe form of the sonnet,—and yet it touches. It does not touch merely because it expresses a generous horror of the abominable doctrine that all persons who are not Christians must go to hell, and be burned alive for ever and ever; it touches really because it is full of true romantic spirit, full of warm human feeling, upon which no cold restraint or rule has been placed. It is about the mummy of an Egyptian girl. The poet lost in Egypt a daughter

called Mary. She had been taken to Egypt for the sake of the climate. Some time afterward the bereaved father was shown the mummy of a little girl probably dead for a thousand years before an English foot ever trod the land of Egypt. I suppose he then thought to himself, "Four or five thousand years ago the father and the mother of this little girl must have had the same pain that I and my wife now have. They embalmed their little daughter, no doubt, with many tears and prayers; and they buried with her a little scroll of Egyptian prayers and charms for the little spirit to repeat in the next world. How wicked it would be to think that all the faith and love of those millions who lived in times past have been of no moral value." And then he wrote these lines:

> When the four quarters of the world shall rise,
> Men, women, children, at the judgment-time,
> Perchance this Memphian girl, dead ere her prime,
> Shall drop her mask, and with dark new-born eyes
> Salute our English Mary, loved and lost;
> The Father knows her little scroll of prayer
> And life as pure as His Egyptian air;
> For though she knew not Jesus, nor the cost
> At which He won the world, she learned to pray
> And though our own sweet babe on Christ's good name
> Spent her last breath, premonished and advised
> Of Him, and in His glorious Church baptized,
> She will not spurn the Old-World child away,
> Nor put her poor embalmed heart to shame.

The beauty of this poem I find to be chiefly the struggle between the man's religious prejudices, his religious education, and the natural emotion that forces him to think more generously about matters of this kind than other clergymen might do. You will see that he thinks his own little daughter buried there will rise again at the Judgment Day, not in company with English sisters, but with the ghosts of the old Egyptian pagans, and very probably with the very little girl whose mummy he has been looking at. And he

thinks to himself, "Well, my daughter will love that little Egyptian girl and want to play with her. 'Tis true that the little girl was not a Christian, and my little girl was a very good Christian. But perhaps the father of all of us will find the Egyptian child to be quite as good and pure as my own; she must have been good; had she not learned to pray?" Now for a clergyman of the English church even to go thus far in the direction of religious generosity in poetry is rather remarkable; you may think that he must have been under deep emotion when he wrote. He wrote this with perfect classical correctness, but he infused into the poem an emotional warmth and colour that are quite contrary to classical tradition. As I said before, it is the suggestion of struggle between religion and love that makes for me the great beauty of the sonnet.

The best sonnet ever written by Longfellow, "Nature," shows the same blending of romantic feeling with classical elegance. The imagery is of the most ordinary kind; not so the refined verse which contains it. Although called "Nature," this is really a poem on death.

> As a fond mother when the day is o'er
> Leads by the hand her little child to bed,
> Half willing, half reluctant to be led,
> And leave his broken playthings on the floor,
> Still gazing at them through the open door,
> Nor wholly reassured and comforted
> By promises of others in their stead,
> Which, though more splendid, may not please him more;
> So Nature deals with us, and takes away
> Our playthings one by one, and by the hand
> Leads us to rest so gently, that we go
> Scarce knowing if we wished to go or stay,
> Being too full of sleep to understand
> How far the unknown transcends the what we know.

You have all seen such a universal incident as the poet here describes—at least all of you who remember your

own childhood, or who have some little child brother or child sister to remind you of it. The child is very sorry about the breaking of its toys, and keeps playing with the pieces until it is time to go to sleep. Then the mother comes and says, "Now dear, it is better for you to sleep: do not fret about your toys,—I will buy you a much nicer toy tomorrow." So the child goes away guided by the mother's hand, but still he looks back regretfully towards the place where the broken toy is lying, thinking to himself, "Yes—but the new toy will not be so pretty as the broken one, I think!" In the same way when men become old and their work is only half done—therefore broken, as it were—death comes and says, "It is time for you to sleep." A man regrets thus having to go, in spite of the promise religion makes to him about happier things and more beautiful things in the next world. But he is not able to think very much about the matter. The touch of death makes him too sleepy to be very much afraid or very sorry, just as the child is too sleepy at bed time even to talk about broken toys left behind. The kind of death here described is what has been called euthanasia, the fortunate or happy death that sometimes comes to men in extreme old age, and puts them to sleep quite gently, without any pain, never to wake again.

I have begun with these examples of the two methods only as illustrative. But you remember that the title of this lecture is "*Some* poems on Death," and I am not going to attempt so vast a thing as a general lecture upon the subject of Death in English poetry. That would require years of lecturing. What I am going to talk about are only certain striking later poems upon this topic,—poems illustrating the later thoughts of the century about death scientifically or philosophically.

The poems which I am now going to cite will refer both to death as signifying change and to the dead as signifying a living influence—the inherited tendencies which shape

character. For example, here is a little poem about the dead who continue to live with us. To you perhaps the ideas in this poem will appear very old, but to Western thought they are new; and in any event the treatment of the idea is new. The title is "The Dead."

> The dead abide with us! Though stark and cold
> Earth seems to grip them, they are with us still;
> They have forged our chains of being for good or ill;
> And their invisible hands these hands yet hold.
> Our perishable bodies are the mould
> In which their strong imperishable will—
> Mortality's deep yearning to fulfil—
> Hath grown incorporate through dim time untold.
> Vibrations infinite of life in death
> As a star's travelling light survives its star!
> So may we hold our lives, that when we are
> The fate of those who then will draw this breath,
> They shall not drag us to their judgment-bar,
> And curse the heritage which we bequeath.

This composition by Mathilde Blind, a great friend of the scientist Wallace and now widely known as a writer of verse upon scientific subjects, contains a full declaration of the evolutional doctrine of heredity. I suppose you know the wonderful fact here referred to about the light of the star continuing to live long after the star is dead. Astronomers have proved to us that we are still able to see in the skies an appearance of stars that really died many thousands of years ago. But those stars were so far away that it took their light all that time to reach this world; and thus we are still able to see the light, because it began to travel towards us before the stars died, and has not yet finished coming. The suggestion is that the will of the dead, in the meaning of tendency as well as in that of desire, survives the body and continues to act, much as the light of a dead star continues to travel.

Within late years the idea of this moral responsibility to the future and to the past has begun to make itself

more and more felt in Western poetry. In Eastern poetry it is old; in Western poetry it is almost new. A hundred years ago no person would have thought of writing such stanzas as these following, at least in a poem upon the brotherhood of nations with a common origin. The nations are England and the United States, and the poem, by Helen Gray Cone, is addressed to "Fair England."

> What! phantoms are we, spectre-thin,
> Unfathered, out of nothing born?
> Did Being in this world begin
> With blaze of yestermorn?
>
> Nay! Sacred Life, a scarlet thread,
> Through lost unnumbered lives has run;
> No strength can tear us from the dead;
> The sire is in the son.

Such an utterance would have startled the English eighteenth century; perhaps the only poet of Johnson's time who could have found the meaning of it would have been Blake. But the idea that the will of the dead influences the acts and the thoughts of the living is not merely expressed in a general way in latter-day poetry. Sometimes fancy furnishes details, incidents, suggestions that touch us better than any general statement could do. Here I have a little poem by Richard Burton, called "The Forefather." It is interesting as a sign of the thought of the times. A young man in the country lying down to sleep at night is startled by the strange sensation of being in a battle. Everything about him is dark and silent; yet it seems to him that he can hear, as if it were in his own heart, the clash of arms, the shouting of the captains, all the clamour of a great contest; and he can even feel the excitement of battle within himself. Is he dreaming? No, he is awake; and these ideas and feelings come to him involuntarily.

But let us quote his own words and his interpretation of the mystery:

Here at the country inn,
I lie in my quiet bed,
And the ardent onrush of armies
Throbs and throbs in my head.

Why, in this calm, sweet place,
Where only silence is heard,
Am I ware of the crash of conflict—
Is my blood to battle stirred?

Without, the night is blessed
With the smell of pines, with stars;
Within, is the mood of slumber,
The healing of day-time scars.

'Tis strange, yet I am thrall
To epic agonies;
The tumult of myriads dying
Is borne to me on the breeze.

Mayhap in the long ago,
My forefather grim and stark
Stood in some hell of carnage,
Face forward, fell in the dark.

And I, who have always known
Peace with her dove-like ways,
Am gripped by his martial spirit
Here in the afterdays.

I cannot rightly tell:
I lie, from all stress apart,
And the ardent onrush of armies
Surges hot through my heart.

Perhaps you will have noticed the expression in the second stanza about silence being heard; and if you have never seen it before it may seem strange to you. Western poets often use this expression to signify the most intense silence.

It is very much like another and commoner expression, "You could almost hear the night breathe." Such expressions imply only that in the great stillness sounds can be heard which are never heard in the daytime.

An Englishwoman, Alice Meynell, has produceed a beautiful poem upon the topic we are discussing. It is called "The Modern Poet." The idea of the poem is less fantastic than that of the one which I have given above, but it is more touching and more true; it is simply that power to see and to feel the beautiful, and the power to express the vision or the feeling in poetical language, come to us from the dead. The poet can write beautiful things only because the thoughts and the impulses of thousands, perhaps millions, of poetical ancestors are in his blood. If he delights in the clear blue of a summer sky, or the snowy beauty of mountain peaks, or the dancing of sunlight upon the waters, it is because the dead within him loved all these things and rejoiced in the Nature that inspires him to sing. The beauty of this composition is not confined to the thought, however; the similes are remarkably effective and imposing.

I come from nothing; but from where
Come the undying thoughts I bear?
    Down through long links of death and birth,
    From the past poets of the earth.
My immortality is there.

I am like the blossom of an hour,
But long, long vanished sun and shower
    Awoke my breath in the young world's air.
    I track the past back everywhere
Through seed and flower, and seed and flower.

Or I am like a stream that flows
Full of the cold springs that arose
    In morning lands, in distant hills;
    And down the plain my channel fills
With melting of forgotten snows.

Voices I have not heard possessed
My own fresh songs; my thoughts are blessed
With relics of the far unknown;
And mixed with memories not my own
The sweet streams throng into my breast.

Before this life began to be,
The happy songs that wake in me
Woke long ago, and far apart;
Heavily on this little heart
Presses this immortality.

We shall see how beautiful this is better by a paraphrase:

"You say that I am come from Nothing. But where do the immortal thoughts which I have, come from? I know where they come from; from the thousand generations of the past, from millions and millions of brains and hearts that are dust, from myriads of long-dead poets these beautiful thoughts must have come to me. Only in thought is there any real immortality, and by thought I know myself immortal. It is true that I am only like the flower that lives but for a little time. But the race of flowers to which I belong was brought into existence millions of years ago. Dead suns ripened it, the soil of long vanished worlds nourished the roots of it. I can trace back the past through all times through all the beginnings, beyond all the blossomings.

"Or this life of mine might be compared to a river flowing full of cold water, cold and pure water, water that rose in the clear springs of mountains too far away to be seen, in countries too far away to be visited. And in the great plain through which I flow I feel my channel filled with the melting of snow that fell so far away, so long ago, that its falling can not be remembered.

"I hear speaking within my heart, voices that are not mine; and these voices also speak in the songs that I write. My very thoughts are not my own thoughts; thoughts of the dead, thoughts of the things that have happened in

times unknown, in places unknown, are mixed with them, and the feelings and the ideas belonging to other lives and the memories of other lives pour into my heart.

"Before ever I was born, the joyful imaginations that I expressed in my poems existed in other minds, in other lives, at long intervals of time. And the whole emotion of dead worlds, of dead generations, presses upon my life. Hard it is to bear within one the weight of the past."

You will see the beauty of this more and more each time that you read it over. The suggestions are of the most general kind; but they are not less grand for that. However, examples of imagination of the same kind are not wanting, and some of them are very remarkable.

A French boy named Henri Charles Read, who died at the age of nineteen, was the author of some very curious poetry on this subject. Young as he was, the great mystery of life oppressed him, the new thought of the nineteenth century only increased the weight of the riddle that troubled him. He was not able in so short a life to master the teachings of the new philosophy in regard to the problem, but he was able to express that problem in a very simple and touching way.

I think that God resolved to be
  Ungenerous when I came on earth.
And that the heart He gave to me
  Was old already ere my birth.

He placed within my youthful breast
  A worn-out heart to save expense,
A heart long tortured by unrest
  And torn by passion's violence.

Its thousand thousand scars proclaim
  A thousand episodes of woe,
And yet I know not how it came
  By all those wounds which hurt it so.

Within its chambers linger hosts
  Of passion's memories, never mine,—
Dead fires, dreams faded-out, the ghosts
  Of suns that long have ceased to shine.

O weirdest fate, most ghastly woe,
  Anguish unrivalled, peerless pain,—
To wildly love and never know
  The object wildly loved in vain!

That a young boy should have felt these things is not at all wonderful; what is wonderful only is that without scientific teaching he should have been able to express the feeling so wonderfully. Undoubtedly the lad was a natural genius, and would have been a very great poet if gifted with the strength to live. But he was early carried off by a disease of the lungs. His few but remarkable poems are now well known to thinkers in every country of Europe. The last stanza of the little composition intimates, of course, that the awakening of this frail and beautiful talent was coincident with the first change from boyhood to manhood.

But there is another way in which the dead live on besides the path of hereditary tendency. They live not only in the minds and the hearts of their descendants; art also sometimes furnishes them with a body. You know some of the old Greek stories on this subject, perhaps; certainly you know many Chinese and Japanese stories about pictures or statues having ghosts, living with the life of that which they represented. Western poetry has very little on this subject, but the little is interesting in more ways than one. I do not speak of such stories as that of Pygmalion, who made the statue of a beautiful woman and fell in love with it, so that the gods took pity on him and made the statue alive. That story has really nothing to do with the subject of which I am speaking. I mean the idea that in painting a picture or making a statue, something of the soul of the

person represented entered into the work. This is rather an Eastern than a Western fancy; and as I say, it has been very little treated by Western poets, although Edgar Poe has a prose story about an artist who painted so perfectly the picture of a girl that all her soul went out of her body into the picture, and she died. But we have one modern, indeed, very recent poem about a Greek vase, which embodies this notion in a very pretty way. It is by an American poet called Sherman.

Divinely shapen cup, thy lip
Unto me seemeth thus to speak:
"Behold in me the workmanship,
The grace and cunning of a Greek!

Long ages since he mixed the clay,
Whose sense of symmetry was such
The labour of a single day
Immortal grew beneath his touch.

For, dreaming while his fingers went
Around this slender neck of mine
The form of her he loved was blent
With every matchless curve and line.

Her loveliness to me he gave
Who gave unto herself his heart,
That love and beauty from the grave
Might rise and live again in art."

And hearing from thy lips this tale,
Of love and skill, of art and grace,
Thou seem'st to me no more the frail
Memento of an older race:

But in thy form divinely wrought
And figured o'er with fret and scroll,
I dream, by happy chance was caught,
And dwelleth now, that maiden's soul.

There is exactly such an idea in the old Chinese story

about that god of porcelain, once a human workman who burnt himself in a furnace in order that the vase which he was making by command of the Emperor should become perfect. The legend says that his soul went into the vase, and that, when tapped with a finger, it would utter the name of its maker.

I suppose that we have now read a sufficient number of illustrative poems on this subject. Before concluding, I want you to notice particularly that the thoughts in the poems which I have quoted are not, in most cases, Western thoughts, and that the poems belong to a new era of imagination. They represent exotic influence, especially Oriental influence—partly Indian, no doubt, but also in part Chinese and Japanese. It is a very interesting subject to which we may return again, this influence of Eastern thought upon Western poetry. I think that it is constantly growing, and that we shall see and hear much more of it. And I may say that even Tennyson was slightly affected by these new influences before he passed away. His swan-song, "Crossing the Bar," owes most of its beauties to fancies much more Oriental than Occidental. The infinite sea of which he speaks in that poem, that sea with the moving of whose tides worlds and lives come and go, what is it after all but the Oriental Sea of Death and Birth?—and the Bark, what is it as a symbol but the ancient Buddhist vessel of Faith, in which the virtues may pass to the further shore? Yet Tennyson was, after all, somewhat old-fashioned. If even he was inspired to create so enchanting a thing as "Crossing the Bar" by the new influences from the thought of the East, we may be tolerably sure that the poets of the present century, the new era just beginning, will produce work much more akin in thought and feeling to Eastern philosophical poetry than their predecessors of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER XX

SOME FAIRY LITERATURE

I SUPPOSE you know by this time that the word "fairy" is a very modern word as used in the sense of spirit. The original meaning of the word was magic, supernatural power, and the old English writers used it in this sense. So does Sir Walter Scott sometimes. The word used to be spelled "faerie"; and the term "faerie land" originally meant "land of magic." Much later the term was applied to a supernatural being or person, for which the real English word was El, or Elf.

The El-people were Northern fairies. But where did the whole conception of fairies come from? The Romans had their Fatæ, in many respects like our fairies. But there are a great many curious ideas regarding fairies which we must look to the history of religion to explain. When the Christian church first began to exercise a great influence in the old Roman world, its priests never even dreamed of telling the people that there were no such things as gods or spirits. Quite the contrary. The church said that all the gods and spirits of the Greek and Roman world really existed, only they were no true gods but evil spirits who took the shape of gods. Gradually all the shadowy people of all beliefs were transformed in the popular imagination; they were no longer worshipped, but they were feared. To worship them constituted the crime of magic.

So much for the classical part of the belief. Now when the Northern races over-ran Southern Europe, they brought other superstitions with them from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany—especially superstitions of the El-people. It would have been of no use for the church to tell these men that the El-people did not exist; moreover, the church

was inclined to believe that they did exist. So they were left to keep the belief in the El-people, on condition that they did not worship them.

The Celtic peoples in Ireland, England, Scotland, and Western France, the original populations conquered by the men of the North, had very strange beliefs of their own about spirits inhabiting woods, rivers and mountains, spirits capable of assuming a hundred forms. Christianity tolerated beliefs of this kind also. They have not yet disappeared. In Scotland, they are beginning to disappear, because of the spread of education and of industry. Ireland and Britanny remain especially the regions in which fairy beliefs widely prevail; and the attachment of the people there to religion may have something to do with the continuance of the belief in fairies.

So you see that there are three elements in the belief about fairies, the Northern, the classical, and the Celtic. Mingled altogether, these three elements eventually produced a wonderful amount of romantic, poetic, and also terrible, imagination. In the early part of the nineteenth century a great deal of attention was given to fairy literature, principally owing to the influence of Sir Walter Scott. Fairy stories of foreign origin were translated into English in great numbers. In the latter part of the century there was for a time something of a popular reaction against the romantic and supernatural element either in prose or in poetry. But now another reaction has set in, and fairy literature has again become popular. It has one representative poet, William Butler Yeats, who himself collected a great number of stories and legends about fairies from the peasantry of Southern Ireland.

Now to give a detailed account of fairy superstitions would be of little use in this place; for a great deal of ghostly detail at one time has the effect of numbing the imagination, and the student can not readily perceive the literary value of these details,—a fact that Walter Scott

perceived long ago. His words were: "The supernatural is a spring that is particularly apt to lose its elasticity, if too much pressed upon." The best way to learn about the romantic side of fairy beliefs is to read the poems and stories themselves, a little at a time. If you read much of this kind of thing at once you are likely to get tired of it, or at least to feel your intellect offended by the sense of the improbable. Yet I think that you will be interested by a little piece called "The Host of the Air," which is the best modern fairy poem by far which I know of. By "modern" in this case I mean produced in our own time; for the fairy poem of Keats is also modern, in so far as it belongs to the century.

O'Driscoll drove with a song
  The wild duck and the drake,
From the tall and the tufted weeds
  Of the drear Hart Lake.

And he saw how the weeds grew dark
  At the coming of night tide;—
And he dreamed of the long dim hair,
  Of Bridget, his bride.

He heard while he sang and dreamed
  A piper piping away,
And never was piping so sad,
  And never was piper so gay.

And he saw young men and young girls
  Who danced on a level place,
And Bridget his bride among them
  With a sad and a gay face.

The dancers crowded about him,
  And many a sweet thing said;
And a young man brought him red wine,
  And a young girl white bread.

But Bridget drew him by the sleeve,
  Away from the merry bands,
To old men playing at cards,
  With a twinkling of ancient hands.

The bread and the wine had a doom;
  For these were the host of the air;
He sat and played in a dream
  Of her long dim hair.

He played with the merry old men,
  And thought not of evil chance,
Till one bore Bridget his bride
  Away from the merry dance.

He bore her away in his arms,
  The handsomest young man there;
And his neck and his breast and his arms
  Were drowned in her long dim hair.

O'Driscoll got up from the grass
  And scattered the cards with a cry;
But the old men and dancers were gone,
  As a cloud faded into the sky.

He knew now the host of the air,
  And his heart was blackened by dread;
And he ran to the door of his house:—
  Old women were keening the dead.

But he heard high up in the air
  A piper piping away;
And never was piping so sad,
  And never was piping so gay!

This is not consummate verse, but as a fairy poem it could not be surpassed. It has, in an extraordinary way, the power of communicating the pleasure of fear, which is a great art in poetry. And the words, the fancies, are all of the strange kind which should belong to so strange a story. How naturally the enchantment begins: a man is amusing

himself in a lonesome place by driving away the wild birds, which are protected by the fairies. Night is coming, and for the first time he notices how tall the grass looks beside the lake, and how black against the sunset. But it is beautiful too, and makes him think of the beautiful long dusky hair of the young wife he has just married. The next moment, as he walks along the shore he finds himself in a pleasure party, among young people whom he thinks he knows, and there is his wife too. They treat him very kindly and play cards with him. He is quite happy. They are fairies, but he does not know, and he is not yet in their power. But they bring him wine and bread, wine red as blood, bread white as flesh. He eats and drinks; now the fairies have power to take their revenge. They disappear, he runs home in terrible fear, and as he comes to his house he hears a death-cry. His bride is dead. She has been taken by the fairies. It was her spirit that he saw at the dancing. At that time the spirit might have returned to the body, but when he ate the fairy bread and drank the fairy wine, he really gave his young bride's life away.

You may be here reminded of some of the old Japanese folk stories; there are many Western fairy tales which resemble them. But the fairy belief is much more terrible and gloomy; there is no humour in it; it is the subject of supreme fear. Now this little composition, simple as it looks, contains a great deal of information about fairy beliefs that you would not notice at the first sight. Perhaps you did not notice the contradiction of the statement about the music being sad and merry at the same time, and about the face of the bride being at once sad and glad. One of the signs by which a fairy may be known is that even when smiling and laughing there is something very sad both in the tone of voice and the look of the eyes. And the music which the fairy plays, however lively it seems, has a penetrating melancholy tone. In many parts of the country it is generally understood that you must not annoy the

wild birds without reason. If you do, fairies will take revenge. If you taste their food, there is no more hope for you. I think you will remember Miss Rossetti's poem on the subject of tasting fairy-food, the poem "Goblin Market." This is the same idea. After eating such food one withers and dies. But how about the power to take away the life of another person who does not taste?

There is a queer imagination about this. When fairies want to take a person away from this world into fairy-land, the Irish say that they make the person melancholy, tired of life. If you are melancholy and do not care whether you live or die, the fairies get power to take you away. You die and your soul becomes a fairy. But you can never go to heaven after that. The condition of fairy existence is happiness in this world only; there is no other world for them, and no immortality. This is one form of the belief. The darker form is that all fairies are eventually doomed to eternal fire, and that every seven years one must be taken away unless a human being can be offered as a substitute. Upon the latter belief was founded the very beautiful English ballad of "Tam lin," the best indeed of all the English fairy ballads. Its beauty lies in the fact that it pictures the courage of love against supernatural fear.

Of course the most famous fairy literature belongs to popular literature, to the literature of the ballad; but for the moment I am intending only to call your attention to celebrated poems of a less known variety, and I shall not quote from works in dialect. So only recommending you to study the ballad just mentioned, I shall go on to speak of its theme as handled by various eminent poets. One of these was Sir Samuel Ferguson, a poet of very considerable ability, some of whose work will live long in English literature. His "Fairy Thorn" is justly celebrated, not only as excellent poetry, but as having extraordinary power in arousing the sensation of the weird. The story is of three country girls, who go out to dance upon a hillside, and on

the way invite a fourth, the most beautiful girl in the village, to accompany them. They begin to dance.

The merry maidens four have ranged them in a row,
Between each lovely couple a stately rowan stem,
And away in mazes wavy like skimming birds they go;—
Oh! never carolled bird like them!

But solemn is the silence of the silvery haze,
That drinks away their voices in echoless repose
And dreamily the evening has stilled the haunted braes,
And dreamier the gloaming grows.

And sinking one by one like lark notes from the sky,
When the falcon's shadow saileth across the open shaw,
Are hushed the maidens' voices, as cowering down they lie,
In the flutter of their sudden awe.

For from the air above, and the grassy ground beneath,
And from the mountain ashes, and the old whitethorn between,
A power of faint enchantment doth through their beings breathe,
And they sink down together on the green.

They sink together silent, and, stealing side by side,
They fling their lovely arms o'er their drooping necks so fair,
Then vainly strive again their naked arms to hide,—
For their shrinking necks again are bare.

Thus clasped and prostrate all, with their heads together bowed,
Soft o'er their bosoms beating—the only human sound—
They hear the silken footsteps of the silent fairy crowd,
Like a river in the air, gliding round.

No scream can any raise, no prayer can any say,
But wild, wild the terror of the speechless three;
For they feel fair Anna Grace drawn silently away,
By whom they dare not look to see.

They feel their tresses twine with her parting locks of gold,
And the curls elastic falling, as her head withdraws;
They feel her sliding arms from their tranced arms unfold,
But they dare not look to see the cause.

For heavy on their senses the faint enchantment lies,
Through all that night of anguish and perilous amaze;
And neither fear nor wonder can ope their quivering eyes,
Or their limbs from the cold ground raise.

So they remain until morning, when the enchantment is dissolved; then they fly home in terror. But from that night they pine away, and die within the year. As for the girl stolen away, she is never seen or heard of again. I have not quoted the whole of the poem, but it is all very beautiful and very weird. Notice even the weirdness of these lines describing the dance:

They're glancing through the glimmer of the quiet eve,
Away in milky wavings of neck and ankle bare;
The heavy-sliding stream in its sleeping song they leave,
And the crags in the ghostly air.

Now this has wonderful merits, especially because it embodies the sensation of a bad dream; it describes the feeling of nightmare with which everybody is familiar. As the girls dance, the air seems to become sick and strange about them, and the voice makes no sound. This is a dream. Next, they can not move. This again is a dream. They dare not look to see what is coming, but they hear it come. It does not touch them; but they feel their friend being silently pulled away from between them, and can not help her. All this is very faithful to the experience of an evil dream. Indeed, most kinds of supernatural fear are believed to have had their origin in the experience of sleep.

Ferguson's poem is perhaps the best minor work in this direction, but a greater poet than he in some respects, Mr. Robert Buchanan, has also produced a very strange fairy poem, "The Fairy Foster-Mother." This brings us to a new phase of the superstition.

It is believed that occasionally, when a fairy mother is not able to nourish her own child, she will steal away some

human mother who has milk, and force her to act as foster-mother for the fairy baby. Mysterious disappearances of peasant women are sometimes thus accounted for in Ireland. Very possibly the woman has been killed, or lost in a bog. But the people say, "She was taken by the little folk for a foster-mother." Mr. Buchanan attempts to imagine the feelings of the mother in such a situation. His poem is very interesting, but it has not the same kind of value as Mr. Ferguson's, nor is it put into that dreamy verse which adds so much to the effect of "The Fairy Thorn." I shall quote a few lines. The poem is a monologue; the mother is speaking to the fairy child.

Bright Eyes, Light Eyes, Daughter of a Fay!—
I had not been a wedded wife a twelve-month and a day,
I had not nursed my little one a month upon my knee,
When down among the blue-bell banks rose elfins three times three,—
They gripped me by the raven hair,—I could not cry for fear,
They put a hempen rope around my waist, and dragged me here!
They made me sit and give thee suck as mortal mothers can,—
Bright Eyes, Light Eyes, strange and weak and wan.

Dim Face, Grim Face! lie ye there so still?
Thy red lips are at my breast and thou may'st suck thy fill,
But know ye, tho' I hold thee firm and rock thee to and fro,
'Tis not to soothe thee into sleep, but just to still my woe.
Gold Hair, Cold Hair! Daughter to a King!
Wrapped in bands of snow-white silk and jewels glittering,
Tiny slippers of the gold upon thy feet so thin,
Silver cradle velvet-lined for thee to slumber in,
Pygmy pages, crimson-haired, to serve thee on their knees,
To fan thy face with ferns and bring thee honey bags of bees—
I was but a peasant lass, my babe had but the milk,
Gold Hair! Cold Hair, raimented in silk!

The weakness here is in the human interest. Although full of imagination and not without art, this poem touches neither our sense of pity nor our sense of fear. But it is worth reading, and it illustrates a side of the fairy belief very seldom touched upon. That is especially why I

quoted from it. But I had another reason. In the first stanza the fairy child is addressed as "Bright Eyes," and the suggestion is of beauty; in the second stanza the child's face is spoken of as dim, grim. This is not a contradiction; the face of the fairy child is supposed to change suddenly and strangely. And because of this supposition the horrible superstition about changelings once prevailed very extensively in all English-speaking countries. What is a changeling?

One method which the fairies had of stealing human children, according to popular fancy, was to leave a fairy child in place of the human child. At first the fairy child resembled the stolen child so much that the mother was deceived; but later on the child would become ugly and fierce, and show all the dispositions of a goblin. If ill-treated, it would first revenge itself and then vanish away. Now you all know that during the first six months after birth the face of the little child changes very curiously, so that you hear the parents saying one day, "He is like his uncle," another day, "He is like his grandfather." In the time when people were superstitious in Europe, this changing of the child's face seemed to them supernatural and suspicious. Many a mother thought that her real child had been stolen and in exchange a fairy child put in its place. How was she to find out the truth? Only in one way—by putting her baby upon burning coals or burning wood. Hundreds of children were actually burned alive by their own mothers, because of this frightful fancy. The mother thought the fairy child would disappear, when placed upon the fire, but there was nothing supernatural to be seen. It is very curious to notice that this belief crossed over the Atlantic to America with the first English settlers, and the Puritans of New England appear to have been affected by it. One tradition of the kind, preserved among the Quaker people of New England who fought bravely against superstition, has been made the subject of a very touching poem by Whittier,

entitled "The Changeling." Like most of his best works, it is written in the simplest quatrains, and is worth quoting chiefly because of the emotional truth and tenderness which it expresses.

First we are told about the happy marriage of a young girl in the town of Hampton, and her fortunate choice of a husband. She has a little girl at the end of the year, and at first she is very happy with the child. But within another year the superstition takes hold of her. She has seen the face of the child change, and she begins not only to fear but to hate it. She actually asks her husband to prepare the fire upon which the child is to be placed.

"It's never my own little daughter,
  It's never my own," she said;
"The witches have stolen my Anna
  And left me an imp instead.

"O fair and sweet was my baby,
  Blue eyes and hair of gold;
But this is ugly and wrinkled
  Cross, and cunning and old.

"I hate the touch of her fingers!
  I hate the feel of her skin;
It's not the milk from my bosom
  But my blood, that she sucks in.

"My face grows sharp with the torment,
  My arms are skin and bone!
Rake open the red coals, good man:
  And the witch shall have her own."

For it was thought, when the child was put in the fire, the evil spirit would come to save it. Happily the "good man" in this case was a man of common sense and kind heart, and he answers his wife's cruel wish by simply kneeling down and making this touching prayer to the great All-Father:

"Thy daughter is weak and blind,
Let her sight come back, and clothe her
Once more in her right mind.

"Lead her out of this evil shadow,
Out of these fancies wild;
Let the holy love of the mother
Turn again to her child.

"Make her lips like the lips of Mary
Kissing her blessed Son;
Let her hands, like the hand of Jesus,
Rest on her little one."

By this method, kind and wise, of meeting the superstitious terror, the illusion is dissipated; the mother soon becomes shamed and horrified at her fear, on finding that her husband only considers it a madness of the mind. This poem, founded on fact, is followed by another which is well worth reading, called "Kallundborg Church." This is the story of a man who, in order to obtain a girl in marriage, makes a bargain with the fairies of the ground to build him a church. The fairies agree, but on the condition that when the church is finished, he must be able to tell the name of the builder; otherwise they will take his eyes and his heart out of his body in payment. Happily he is saved by hearing the fairy wife of the builder singing a song in which her husband's name is mentioned. This is little more than a translation of a very famous Norse poem upon the same subject.

Even the serious Wordsworth touched a little upon fairy lore; you will find a sonnet by him entitled "The Faëry Chasm." This is not remarkable enough to quote here; I mention it only to show how far the influence of fairy superstitions colour the work even of so solemn a poet as he. All the poets of note at the beginning of the century gave attention to this subject. Scott's influence, as I said, was the greatest of all in making fairy literature fashionable, in

lifting it up to the highest level of romantic poetry. He did this especially by collecting all the peasant songs and legends that he could find, writing them down from the lips of the peasants themselves, and afterwards publishing them in the "The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border." Southey did much work in the same direction. Shelley was almost a fairy himself; and though in no page in his work will you find a real fairy poem, the spirit of all his composition is strongly coloured and etherealized by the study of fairy beliefs. Keats produced the most beautiful original fairy ballad of his time, perhaps the most beautiful of all modern time, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." Even Byron attempted fairy stories in verse, but his genius did not lie in that field, and his work in that kind only served to show how the spirit of Scott had affected him. Minor writers did a great deal towards fairy literature during the same period; and Lewis's "Tales of Wonder" embodied much valuable research in regard to fairy beliefs. With the new poetry of Tennyson, and the Tennyson group, there was a change, but a change of method rather than of substance. Tennyson himself has touched fairy topics with extraordinary skill, and all through his idyls, as well as in his earlier poems, you will find evidence of the manner in which he comprehended the romantic side of fairy superstition. Rossetti has embodied many of the superstitions in his extraordinary work, for instance in the story of "Rose Mary." Browning shows fairy lights here and there, and very weird ones; perhaps the most notable example of his skill in this field is the wonderful tale of the "Pied Piper of Hamlin," an old German goblin-story, which he put into poetical form for the sake of a child friend. Swinburne has used some fairy literature in imitation of the Northern dialect ballads; but one of his most notable compositions, "Laus Veneris," though not avowedly what is called commonly a fairy tale, really is a fairy tale, perhaps stranger and more touching than all the fairy tales of the

Middle Ages. Then in William Morris's "Earthly Paradise" you will find an immense collection of fairy legends beautifully told; and numerous other such legends are scattered through other volumes of his, about which I hope to give you a short lecture before long. Previously I spoke to you about what several of the later minor poets, notably Miss Rossetti, had done in the fairy tale. You will see from such brief notes as these how large is still the relation of the fairy superstitions to English literature. Even such grave critics as Edmund Gosse and Stopford Brooke have condescended to sing fairy songs. And perhaps among the now living poets of genius the best imitator of fairy ballads is Rudyard Kipling. Whenever Kipling writes a poem or a ballad, however, he usually has a larger purpose than at first appears, and his "Last Rhyme of True Thomas" deserves mentioning here, not simply because of its wonderful excellence as weird poetry, but because it expresses the nobility and the power of the poet as a teacher and an artist. It was written when there was some discussion about calling Kipling to the laureateship, which you know was given to Alfred Austen, a very low fourth or fifth class poet. It then occurred to Kipling to express his thought about that matter in the form of a ballad. A king comes to make a knight of "True Thomas," the famous hero of many old Scotch ballads. But Thomas laughs at the offer of such honour. He takes his fairy harp and sings, and the king weeps. He plays again, and the king laughs. A third time he plays, and the king wants to go to war; a fourth time he plays, and the king becomes humble and gentle like a little child. Then says Thomas, "I can make you do whatever I wish, can make you laugh or weep or rage at my will; is it not ridiculous for you to talk about making me a knight?" I need scarcely explain the excellent irony concealed behind these quaint verses. Were they not written in dialect, I should like to quote them.

Now you may be interested to know that even today

serious fairy dramas are written. Of course, on the Celtic stage a great deal is borrowed from fairy tales, and operas and the most extravagant of what are called spectacular dramas are made more interesting by the introduction of fairy personages and fairy dancers. The dark side of the belief is less often dealt with. But the "Land of Heart's Desire" is the name of a fairy drama recently composed by William Butler Yeats which has been acted with some success, and which is interesting as showing you some new possibilities. It is a very short composition treating only of a single episode. A family at night, seated about the fire, are startled by the entrance of a little child who appears to have lost her way. In the house there is a priest, who at once suspects that the child is not a human being. The interest of the whole action is made to lie in the way this fairy child deludes priest, parents, husband, and servants successively, in order to steal away the daughter-in-law, the new bride. Though the conditions are supernatural, the play of emotions is purely and intensely human and thus an impossible situation is made to become intensely interesting. For example, the strange child observes a crucifix upon the wall of the room as she enters, and she makes them take it way. The method by which she obliges them to take it away, notwithstanding their zealous belief in its power to protect them, is delightfully managed.

C.—What is that ugly thing on the black cross?
P.—You can not know how naughty your words are! that is our Blessed Lord!
C.—Hide it away.
P.—That would be wickedness.
C.—The tortured thing!—hide it away.

This and what follows is supremely natural, and we are not at all surprised when the priest is eventually overcome by the appeal to his human and paternal side. The single expression "tortured thing" is here sufficient to show the artist.

You may ask perhaps why I give so much time to a discussion of foreign superstition in foreign literature. This is really worth while. I am quite sure that it is, but not because the superstition happens to be Western. When you can judge of the value that such ideas have been to European poetry and romance, you will be better able to understand the possible future value to your own literature of Eastern beliefs that are now passing or likely to pass away. To an unimaginative and dryly practical man such things are simply superstition, absurd rubbish. But to the true poet or dramatist or story-teller they are all, or nearly all, of priceless value. The whole question is or should be how to use them.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL ROMANCE OF THE MIDDLE AGES

The value of romantic literature, which has been, so far as the Middle Ages are concerned, unjustly depreciated, does not depend upon beauty of words or beauty of fact. Today the immense debt of modern literature to the literature of the Middle Ages is better understood; and we are generally beginning to recognize what we owe to the imagination of the Middle Ages, in spite of the ignorance, the superstition and the cruelty of that time. If the evils of the Middle Ages had really been universal, those ages could not have imparted to us lessons of beauty and lessons of nobility having nothing to do with literary form in themselves, yet profoundly affecting modern poetry of the highest class. No; there was very much of moral goodness, as well as of moral badness in the Middle Ages; and what was good happened to be very good indeed. Commonly it used to be said (though I do not think any good critic would say it now) that the fervid faith of the time made the moral beauty. Unless we modify this statement a great deal, we cannot now accept it at all. There was indeed a religious beauty, particularly mediaeval, but it was not that which created the romance of the period. Indeed, that romantic literature was something of a reaction against the religious restraint upon imagination. But if we mean by mediaeval faith only that which is very much older than any European civilization, and which does not belong to the West any more than to the East—the profound belief in human moral experience—then I think that the statement is true enough. At no time in European history were men more sincere believers in the value of certain virtues than

during the Middle Ages—and the very best of the romances are just those romances which illustrate that belief, though not written for a merely ethical purpose.

But I cannot better illustrate what I mean than by telling a story, which has nothing to do with Europe or the Middle Ages or any particular form of religious belief. It is not a Christian story at all; and it could not be told you exactly as written, for there are some very curious pages in it. But it is a good example of the worth that may lie in a mere product of imagination.

There was a king once, in Persia or Arabia, who, at the time of his accession to power, discovered a wonderful subterranean hall under the garden of his palace. In one chamber of that hall stood six marvellous statues of young girls, each statue being made out of a single diamond. The beauty as well as the cost of the work was beyond imagination. But in the midst of the statues, which stood in a circle, there was an empty pedestal, and on that pedestal was a precious casket containing a letter from the dead father of the king. The letter said:

"O my son, though these statues of girls are indeed beyond all praise, there is yet a seventh statue incomparably more precious and beautiful which I could not obtain before I died. It is now your duty, O my son, to obtain that statue, that it may be placed upon the seventh pedestal. Go, therefore, and ask my favourite slave, who is still alive, how you are to obtain it." Then the young king went in all haste to that old slave, who had been his father's confidant, and showed him the letter. And the old man said, "Even now, O master, I will go with you to find that statue. But it is in one of the three islands in which the genii dwell; and it is necessary, above all things, that you do not fear, and that you obey my instructions in all things. Also, remember that if you make a promise to the Spirits of that land, the promise must be kept."

And they proceeded upon their journey through a great

wilderness, in which "nothing existed but grass and the presence of God." I cannot try now to tell you about the wonderful things that happened to them, nor about the marvellous boat, rowed by a boatman having upon his shoulders the head of an elephant. Suffice it to say that at last they reached the palace of the king of the Spirits; and the king came to meet them in the form of a beautiful old man with a long white beard. And he said to the young king, "My son, I will gladly help you, as I helped your father; and I will give you that seventh statue of diamond which you desire. But I must ask for a gift in return. You must bring to me here a young girl, of about 16 years old; and she must be very intelligent; and she must be a true maiden, not only as to her body, but as to her soul, and heart, and all her thoughts." The young king thought that was a very easy thing to find, but the king of the Spirits assured him that it was not, and further told him this, "My son, no mortal man is wise enough to know by his own wisdom the purity that is in the heart of a young girl. Only by the help of this magical mirror, which I now lend you, will you be able to know. Look at the reflection of any maiden in this mirror, and then, if her heart is perfectly good and pure, the mirror will remain bright. But if there be any fault in her, the mirror will grow dim. Go now, and do my bidding."

You can imagine, of course, what happened next. Returning to his kingdom, the young king had brought before him many beautiful girls, the daughters of the noblest and highest in all the cities of the land. But in no case did the mirror remain perfectly clear when the ghostly test was applied. For three years in vain the king sought; then in despair he for the first time turned his attention to the common people. And there came before him on the very first day, a rude man of the desert, who said, "I know of just such a girl as you want." Then he went forth and presently returned with a simple girl from the desert,

who had been brought up in the care of her father only, and had lived with no other companion than the members of her own family and the camels and horses of the encampment. And as she stood in her poor dress before the king, he saw that she was much more beautiful than any one whom he had seen before; and he questioned her, only to find that she was very intelligent; and she was not at all afraid or ashamed of standing before the king, but looked about her with large wondering eyes, like the eyes of a child; and whoever met that innocent gaze, felt a great joy in his heart, and could not tell why. And when the king had the mirror brought, and the reflection of the girl was thrown upon it, the mirror became much brighter than before, and shone like a great moon.

There was the maid whom the Spirit-king wished for. The king easily obtained her from her parents; but he did not tell her what he intended to do with her. Now it was his duty to give her to the Spirits; but there was a condition he found very hard to fulfil. By the terms of his promise he was not allowed to kiss her, to caress her, or even to see her, except veiled after the manner of the country. Only by the mirror had he been able to know how fair she was. And the voyage was long; and on the way, the girl, who thought she was going to be this king's bride, became sincerely attached to him, after the manner of a child with a brother; and he also in his heart became much attached to her. But it was his duty to give her up. At last they reached the palace of the Spirit-king; and the figure of the old man came forth and said, "My son, you have done well and kept your promise. This maiden is all that I could have wished for; and I accept her. Now when you go back to your palace, you will find on the seventh pedestal the statue of the diamond which your father desired you to obtain." And, with these words, the Spirit-king vanished, taking with him the girl, who uttered a great and piercing cry to heaven at having been thus deceived. Very sorrow-

fully the young king then began his journey home. All along the way he kept regretting that girl, and regretting the cruelty which he had practised in deceiving her and her parents. And he began to say to himself, "Accursed be the gift of the king of the Spirits! Of what worth to me is a woman of diamond any more than a woman of stone? What is there in all the world half so beautiful or half so precious as a living girl such as I discovered? Fool that I was to give her up for the sake of a statue!" But he tried to console himself by remembering that he had obeyed his dead father's wish.

Still, he could not console himself. Reaching his palace, he went to his secret chamber to weep alone, and he wept night and day, in spite of the efforts of his ministers to comfort him. But at last one of them said, "O my king, in the hall beneath your garden there has appeared a wonderful statue upon the seventh pedestal; perchance if you go to see it, your heart will become more joyful."

Then with great reluctance the king properly dressed himself, and went to the subterranean hall.

There indeed was the statue, the gift of the Spirit-king; and very beautiful it was. But it was not made of diamond, and it looked so strangely like the girl whom he had lost, that the king's heart leapt in his breast for astonishment. He put out his hand and touched the statue, and found it warm with life and youth. And a sweet voice said to him, "Yes, it is really I—have you forgotten?"

Thus she was given back to him; and the Spirit-king came to their wedding, and thus addressed the bridegroom, "O my son, for your dead father's sake I did this thing. For it was meant to teach you that the worth of a really pure and perfect woman is more than the price of any diamond or any treasure that the earth can yield."

Now you can see at once the beauty of this story; and the moral of it is exactly the same as that of the famous verse, in the Book of Proverbs, "Who can find a virtuous

woman? for her price is far above rubies." But it is simply a story from the "Arabian Nights"—one of those stories which you will not find in the ordinary European translations, because it is written in such a way that no English translator except Burton would have dared to translate it quite literally. The obscenity of parts of the original does not really detract in the least from the beauty and tenderness of the motive of the story; and we must remember that what we call moral or immoral in style depends very much upon the fashion of an age and time.

Now it is exactly the same kind of moral charm that distinguishes the best of the old English romances—a charm which has nothing to do with the style, but everything to do with the feeling and suggestion of the composition. But in some of the old romances, the style too has a very great charm of quaintness and simplicity and sincerity not to be imitated today. In this respect the older French romances, from which the English made their renderings, are much the best. And the best of all is said to be "Amis and Amiles," which the English rendered as "Amicus and Amelius." Something of the story ought to interest you.

The whole subject of this romance is the virtue of friendship, though this of course involves a number of other virtues quite as distinguished. Amis and Amiles, that is to say Amicus and Amelius, are two young knights who at the beginning of their career become profoundly attached to each other. Not content with the duties of this natural affection, they imposed upon themselves all the duties which chivalry also attached to the office of friend. The romance tells of how they triumph over every conceivable test to which their friendship was subjected. Often and often the witchcraft of woman worked to separate them, but could not. Both married, yet after marriage their friendship was just as strong as before. Each has to fight many times on account of the other, and suffer all things which it is most hard for a proud and brave man to bear.

But everything is suffered cheerfully, and the friends are such true knights that, in all their trials, neither does anything wrong, or commits the slightest fault against truth—until a certain sad day. On that day it is the duty of Amis to fight in a trial by battle. But he is sick, and cannot fight; then to save his honour his friend Amelius puts on the armour and helmet of Amis, and so pretending to be Amis, goes to the meeting place, and wins the fight gloriously. But this was an act of untruthfulness; he had gone into battle under a false name, and to do anything false even for a good motive is bad. So heaven punishes him by afflicting him with the horrible disease of leprosy.

The conditions of leprosy in the Middle Ages were of a peculiar kind. The disease seems to have been introduced into Europe from Asia—perhaps by the Crusaders. Michelet suggests that it may have resulted from the European want of cleanliness, brought about by ascetic teachings—for the old Greek and Roman public bath-houses were held in horror by the mediaeval church. But this is not at all certain. What is certain is that in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries leprosy became very prevalent. The disease was not then at all understood; it was supposed to be extremely contagious, and the man afflicted by it was immediately separated from society, and not allowed to live in any community under such conditions as could bring him into contact with other inhabitants. His wife or children could accompany him only on the terrible condition of being considered lepers. Every leper wore a kind of monk's dress, with a hood covering the face; and he had to carry a bell and ring it constantly to give notice of his approach. Special leper-houses were built near every town, where such unfortunates might obtain accommodation. They were allowed to beg, but it was considered dangerous to go very near them, so that in most cases alms or food would be thrown to them only, instead of being put into their hands.

Now when the victim of leprosy in this romance is first afflicted by the disease, he happens to be far away from his good friend. And none of his own family is willing to help him; he is regarded with superstitious as well as with physical horror. There is nothing left for him to do but to yield up his knighthood and his welfare and his family, to put on the leper's robe, and to go begging along the roads, carrying a leper's bell. And this he does. For long, long months he goes begging from town to town, till at last, by mere chance, he finds his way to the gate of the great castle where his good friend is living—now a great prince, and married to the daughter of the king. And he asks at the castle gate for charity and for food.

Now the porter at the gate observes that the leper has a very beautiful cup, exactly resembling a drinking cup belonging to his master, and he thinks it his duty to tell these things to the lord of the castle. And the lord of the castle remembers that very long ago he and his friend each had a cup of this kind, given to them by the bishop of Rome. So, hearing the porter's story, he knew that the leper at the gate was the friend who "had delivered him from death, and won for him the daughter of the King of France to be his wife." Here I had better quote from the French version of the story, in which the names of the friends are changed, but without changing the beauty of the tale itself:

"And straightway he fell upon him, and began to weep greatly, and kissed him. And when his wife heard that, she ran out with her hair in disarray, weeping and distressed exceedingly—for she remembered that it was he who had slain the false Andres. And thereupon they placed him in a fair cell, and said to him, 'Abide with us until God's will be accomplished in thee, for all that we have is at thy service.' So he abode with them."

You must understand, by the allusion to "God's will," that leprosy was in the Middle Ages really considered to be a punishment from heaven—so that in taking a leper

into his castle, the good friend was not only offending against the law of the land, but risking celestial punishment as well, according to the notions of that age. His charity, therefore, was true charity indeed, and his friendship without fear. But it was going to be put to a test more terrible than any ever endured before. To comprehend what followed, you must know that there was one horrible superstition of the Middle Ages—the belief that by bathing in human blood the disease of leprosy might be cured. Murders were often committed under the influence of that superstition. I believe you will remember that the "Golden Legend" of Longfellow is founded upon a mediaeval story in which a young girl voluntarily offers up her life in order that her blood may cure the leprosy of her king. In the present romance there is much more tragedy. One night while sleeping in his friend's castle, the leper was awakened by an angel from God—Raphael—who said to him:

"I am Raphael, the angel of the Lord, and I am come to tell thee how thou mayst be healed. Thou shalt bid Amiles thy comrade to slay his two children and wash thee in their blood, and so thy body shall be made whole." And Amis said to him, "Let not this thing be, that my comrade should become a murderer for my sake." But the angel said, "It is convenient that he do this." And thereupon the angel departed.

The phrase, "it is convenient," must be understood as meaning, "it is ordered." For the mediaeval lord used such gentle expressions when issuing his commands; and the angel talked like a feudal messenger. But in spite of the command, the sick man does not tell his friend about the angel's visit, until Amelius, who has overheard the voice, forces him to acknowledge whom he had been talking with during the night. And the emotion of the lord may be imagined, though he utters it only in the following gentle words—"And Amelius says, I would have given to thee my man servants and my maid servants and all my goods—and

thou feignest that an angel hath spoken to thee that I should slay my two children. But I conjure thee by the faith which there is between me and thee, and by our comradeship, and by the baptism we received together, that thou tell me whether it was man or angel said that to thee."

Amis declares that it was really an angel, and Amelius never thinks of doubting his friend's word. It would be a pity to tell you the sequel in my own words; let me quote again from the text, translated by Walter Pater. I think you will find it beautiful and touching:

"Then Amelius began to weep in secret, and thought within himself, 'If this man was ready to die for me, shall I not for him slay my children? Shall I not keep faith with him who was faithful unto death?' And Amelius tarried no longer, but departed to the chamber of his wife, and bade her into the secret office. And he took a sword, and went to the bed where the children were lying, and found them asleep. And he lay down over them and began to weep bitterly and said, 'Has any man yet heard of a father who of his own will slew his own children? Alas, my children! I am no longer your father, but your cruel murderer.'

"And the children awoke at the tears of their father which fell upon them; and they looked up into his face and began to laugh. And as they were of age about three years, he said, 'Your laughing will be turned into tears, for your innocent blood must now be shed'; and therewith he cut off their heads. Then he laid them as though they were sleeping; and with the blood which he had taken he washed his comrade, and said, 'Lord Jesus Christ! who hast commanded men to keep faith on earth, and didst heal the leper by Thy word! cleanse now my comrade, for whose love I have shed the blood of my children.'" And of course the leper is immediately and completely cured. But the mother did not know anything about the killing of the children; we have to hear something about her share in

the tragedy. Let me again quote, this time giving the real and very beautiful conclusion—

"Now neither the father nor the mother had yet entered where the children were, but the father sighed heavily because of their death, and the mother asked for them, that they might rejoice together; but Amelius said, 'Dame! let the children sleep.' And it was already the hour of tiers. And going in alone to the children to weep over them, he found them at play in the bed; only in the place of the sword-cuts about their throats was, as it were, a thread of crimson. And he took them in his arms and carried them to his wife and said, 'Rejoice greatly! For thy children whom I had slain by the commandment of the angel, are alive, and by their blood is Amis healed.' "

I think you will all see how fine a story this is, and feel the emotional force of the grand moral idea behind it. There is nothing more to tell you, except the curious fact that during the Middle Ages, when it was believed that the story was really true, Amis and Amiles—or Amicus and Amelius —were actually considered by the Church as saints, and people used to pray to them. When anybody was anxious for his friend, or feared that he might lose the love of his friend, or was afraid that he might not have strength to perform his duty as friend—then he would go to church to implore help from the good saints Amicus and Amelius. But of course it was all a mistake—a mistake which lasted until the end of the seventeenth century! Then somebody called the attention of the Church to the unmistakable fact that Amicus and Amelius were merely inventions of some mediaeval romancer. Then the Church made investigation, and greatly shocked, withdrew from the list of its saints those long-loved names of Amicus and Amelius—a reform in which I cannot help thinking the Church made a very serious mistake. What matter whether those shadowy figures represented original human lives or only human dreams? They were beautiful, and belief in them made men think

beautiful thoughts, and the imagined help from them had comforted many thousands of hearts. It would have been better to have left them alone; for that matter, how many of the existent lives of saints are really true? Nevertheless the friends are not dead, though expelled from the heaven of the church. They still live in romance; and everybody who reads about them feels a little better for their acquaintance.

What I read to you was from the French version—that is much the more beautiful of the two. You will find some extracts from the English version in the pages of Ten Brink. But as that great German scholar pointed out, the English story is much rougher than the French. For example, in the English story, the knight rushes out of his castle to beat the leper at the gate, and to accuse him of having stolen the cup. And he does beat him ferociously, and abuses him with very violent terms. In fact, the English writer reflected too much of mediaeval English character, in trying to cover, or to improve upon, the French story, which was the first. In the French story all is knightly smooth, refined as well as simple and strong. And where did the mediaeval imagination get its material for the story? Partly, perhaps, from the story of Joseph in the Bible, partly from the story of Abraham; but the scriptural material is so admirably worked over that the whole thing appears deliciously original. That was the great art of the Middle Ages—to make old, old things quite new by the magic of spiritual imagination. Men then lived in a world of dreams. And that world still attracts us, for the simple reason that happiness chiefly consists in dreams. Exact science may help us a great deal, no doubt, but mathematics do not make us any happier. Dreams do, if we can believe them. The Middle Ages could believe them; we, at the best, can only try.

CHAPTER XXII

IONICA

I AM going now to talk about a very rare kind of poetry in a very rare little book, like fine wine in a small and precious flask. The author never put his name to the book —indeed for many years it was not known who wrote the volume. We now know that the author was a school teacher called William Johnson who, later in life, coming into a small fortune, changed his name to William Cory. He was born sometime about 1823, and died in 1892. He was, I believe, an Oxford man and was assistant master of Eton College for a number of years. Judging from his poems, he must have found pleasure in his profession as well as pain. There is a strange sadness nearly always, but this sadness is mixed with expressions of love for the educational establishment which he directed, and for the students whose minds he helped to form. He must have been otherwise a very shy man. Scarcely anything seems to be known about him after his departure from educational circles, although everybody of taste now knows his poems. I wish to speak of them because I think that literary graduates of this university ought to be at least familiar with the name "Ionica." At all events you should know something about the man and about the best of his poems. If you should ask why so little has yet been said about him in books on English literature, I would answer that in the first place he was a very small poet writing in the time of giants, having for competitors Tennyson, Browning and others. He could scarcely make his small pipe heard in the thunder of those great organ tones. In the second place his verses were never written to please the public at all. They were written only for fine scholars, and even the titles of

many of them cannot be explained by a person devoid of some Greek culture. So the little book, which appeared quite early in the Victorian Age, was soon forgotten. Being forgotten it ran out of print and disappeared. Then somebody remembered that it had existed. I have told you that it was like the tone of a little pipe or flute as compared with the organ music of the larger poets. But the little pipe happened to be a Greek pipe—the melody was very sweet and very strange and old, and people who had heard it once soon wanted to hear it again. But they could not get it. Copies of the first edition fetched extraordinary sums. Some few years ago a new edition appeared, but this too is now out of print and is fetching fancy prices. However, you must not expect anything too wonderful from this way of introducing the subject. The facts only show that the poems are liked by persons of refinement and wealth. I hope to make you like some of them, but the difficulties of so doing are considerable, because of the extremely English character of some pieces and the extremely Greek tone of others. There is also some uneven work. The poet is not in all cases successful. Sometimes he tried to write society verse, and his society verse must be considered a failure. The best pieces are his Greek pieces and some compositions on love subjects of a most delicate and bewitching kind.

Of course the very name "Ionica" suggests Greek work, a collection of pieces in Ionic style. But you must not think that this means only repetitions of ancient subjects. This author brings the Greek feeling back again into the very heart of English life sometimes, or makes an English fact illustrate a Greek fable. Some delightful translations from the Greek there are, but less than half a dozen in all.

I scarcely know how to begin—what piece to quote first. But perhaps the little fancy called "Mimnermus in Church" is the best known, and the one which will best serve to introduce us to the character of Cory. Before quoting it,

however, I must explain the title briefly. Mimnermus was an old Greek philosopher and poet who thought that all things in the world are temporary, that all hope of a future life is vain, that there is nothing worth existing for except love, and that without affection one were better dead. There are, no doubt, various modern thinkers who tell you much the same thing, and this little poem exhibits such modern feeling in a Greek dress. I mean that we have here a picture of a young man, a young English scholar, listening in Church to Christian teaching, but answering that teaching with the thought of the old Greeks. There is of course one slight difference; the modern conception of love is perhaps a little wider in range than that of the old Greeks. There is more of the ideal in it.

MIMNERMUS IN CHURCH

You promise Heavens free from strife,
Pure truth, and perfect change of will,
But sweet, sweet is this human life,
So sweet, I fain would breathe it still;
Your chilly stars I can forego,
This warm kind world is all I know.

You say there is no substance here,
One great reality above:
Back from that void I shrink in fear
And child-like hide myself in love;
Show me what angels feel, till then
I cling, a mere weak man, to men.

You bid me lift my mean desires
From faltering lips and fitful veins
To sexless souls, ideal choirs,
Unwearied voices, wordless strains;
My mind with fonder welcome owns
One dear dead friend's remembered tones.

Forsooth the present we must give
To that which cannot pass away;

All beauteous things for which we live
By laws of time and space decay.
But Oh, the very reason why
I clasp them, is because they die.

The preacher has been talking to his congregation about the joys of Heaven. There, he says, there will be no quarrelling, no contest, no falsehood, and all evil dispositions will be entirely changed to good. The poet answers, "This world and this life are full of beauty and of joy for me. I do not want to die, I want to live. I do not wish to go to that cold region of stars about which you teach. I only know this world and I find in it warm hearts and precious affection. You say that this world is a phantom, unsubstantial, unreal, and that the only reality is above, in Heaven. To me that Heaven appears but as an awful emptiness. I shrink from it in terror, and like a child seek for consolation in human love. It is no use to talk to me about angels until you can prove to me that angels can feel happier than men. I prefer to remain with human beings. You say that I ought to wish for higher things than this world can give, that here minds are unsteady and weak, hearts fickle and selfish, and you talk of souls without sex, imaginary concerts of perfect music, tireless singing in Heaven, and the pleasure of conversation without speech. But all the happiness that we know is received from our fellow beings. I remember the voice of one dead friend with deeper love and pleasure than any images of Heaven could ever excite in my mind."

The last stanza needs no paraphrasing, but it deserves some comment, for it is the expression of one great difference between the old Greek feeling in regard to life and death, and all modern religious feeling on the same subject. You can read through hundreds of beautiful inscriptions which were placed over the Greek tombs. They are contained in the "Greek Anthology." You will find there almost noth-

ing about hope of a future life, or about Heaven. They are not for the most part sad; they are actually joyous in many cases. You would say that the Greek mind thought thus about death—"I have had my share of the beauty and the love of this world, and I am grateful for this enjoyment, and now it is time to go to sleep." There is actually an inscription to the effect, "I have supped well of the banquet of life." The Eastern religions, including Christianity, taught that because everything in the world is uncertain, impermanent, perishable, therefore we ought not to allow our minds to love worldly things. But the Greek mind, as expressed by the old epigraphy in the cemeteries, not less than by the teaching of Mimnermus, took exactly the opposite view. "O children of men, it is because beauty and pleasure and love and light can last only for a little while, it is exactly because of this that you should love them. Why refuse to enjoy the present because it can not last for ever?" And at a much later day the Persian poet Omar took, you will remember, precisely the same view. You need not think that it would be wise to accept such teaching for a rule of life, but it has a certain value as a balance to the other extreme view, that we should make ourselves miserable in this world with the idea of being rewarded in another, concerning which we have no positive knowledge. The lines with which the poem concludes at least deserve to be thought about—

> "But Oh, the very reason why
> I clasp them, is because they die."

We shall later on take some of the purely Greek work of Cory for study, but I want now to interest you in the more modern part of it. The charm of the following passage you will better feel by remembering that the writer was then a schoolmaster at Eton, and that the verses particularly express the love which he felt for his students—

a love the more profound, perhaps, because the circumstances of the teacher's position obliged him to appear cold and severe, obliged him to suppress natural impulses of affection and generosity. The discipline of the masters in English public schools is much more severe than the discipline to which the students are subjected. The boys enjoy a great deal of liberty. The masters may be said to have none. Yet there are men so constituted that they learn to greatly love the profession. The title of this poem is "Reparabo," which means "I will atone."

The world will rob me of my friends,
For time with her conspires;
But they shall both, to make amends,
Relight my slumbering fires.

For while my comrades pass away
To bow and smirk and gloze,
Come others for as short a stay,
And dear are these as those.

And who was this? They ask, and then
The loved and lost I praise
"Like you they frolicked, they are men;
Bless ye my later days."

Why fled? The hawks I trained are flown,
'Twas nature bade them range,
I could not keep their wings half-grown,
I could not bar the change.

With lattice opened wide I stand
To watch their eager flight;
With broken jesses in my hand
I muse on their delight.

And Oh! if one with sullied plume
Should droop in mid career,
My love makes signals,—"There is room,
O bleeding wanderer, here."

This comparison of the educator to a falconer, and of the students to young hawks eager to break their jesses, seems to an Englishman particularly happy in reference to Eton, from which so many youths pass into the ranks of the army and navy. The line about bowing, smirking and glozing, refers to the comparative insincerity of the higher society into which so many of the scholars must eventually pass. "Smirking" suggests insincere smiles, "glozing" implies tolerating or lightly passing over faults or wrongs or serious matters that should not be considered lightly. Society is essentially insincere and artificial in all countries, but especially so in England. The old Eton master thinks, however, that he knows the moral character of the boys, the strong principles which make its foundation, and he trusts that they will be able in a general way to do only what is right, in spite of conventions and humbug.

As I told you before, we know very little about the personal life of Cory, who must have been a very reserved man; but a poet puts his heart into his verses as a general rule, and there are many little poems in this book that suggest to us an unhappy love episode. These are extremely pretty and touching, the writer in most cases confessing himself unworthy of the person who charmed him; but the finest thing of the kind is a composition which he suggestively entitled "A Fable"—that is to say, a fable in the Greek sense, an emblem or symbol of truth.

> An eager girl whose father buys
> Some ruined thane's forsaken hall,
> Explores the new domain and tries
> Before the rest to view it all.

I think you have often noted the fact here related; when a family moves to a new house, it is the child, or the youngest daughter, who is the first to explore all the secrets of the new residence, and whose young eyes discover things which the older folks had not noticed.

Alone she lifts the latch, and glides
  Through many a sadly curtained room,
As daylight through the doorway slides
  And struggles with the muffled gloom.

With mimicries of dance she wakes
  The lordly gallery's silent floor,
And climbing up on tiptoe, makes
  The Old World mirror smile once more.

With tankards dry she chills her lips,
  With yellowing laces veils the head,
And leaps in pride of ownership
  Upon the faded marriage bed.

A harp in some dark nook she sees
  Long left a prey to heat and frost,
She smites it; can such tinklings please?
  Is not all worth, all beauty, lost?

Ah, who'd have thought such sweetness clung
  To loose neglected strings like those?
They answered to whate'er was sung,
  And sounded as a lady chose.

Her pitying finger hurried by
  Each vacant space, each slackened chord;
Nor would her wayward zeal let die
  The music-spirit she restored.

The fashion quaint, the timeworn flaws,
  The narrow range, the doubtful tone,
All was excused awhile, because
  It seemed a creature of her own.

Perfection tires; the new in old,
  The mended wrecks that need her skill,
Amuse her; if the truth be told,
  She loves the triumphs of her will.

With this, she dares herself persuade,
  She'll be for many months content,

Quite sure no duchess ever played
  Upon a sweeter instrument.

And thus in sooth she can beguile
  Girlhood's romantic hours, but soon
She yields to taste and mood and style,
  A siren of the gay saloon.

And wonders how she once could like
  Those drooping wires, those failing notes,
And leaves her toy for bats to strike
  Amongst the cobwebs and the motes.

But enter in, thou freezing wind,
  And snap the harp-strings, one by one;
It was a maiden blithe and kind:
  They felt her touch; their task is done.

In this charming little study we know that the harp described is not a harp; it is the loving heart of an old man, at least of a man beyond the usual age of lovers. He has described and perhaps adored some beautiful person who seemed to care for him, and who played upon his heart, with her whims, caresses, smiles, much as one would play upon the strings of a harp. She did not mean to be cruel at all, nor even insincere. It is even probable that she really in those times thought that she loved the man, and under the charms of the girl the man became a different being; the old-fashioned mind brightened, the old-fashioned heart exposed its hidden treasures of tenderness and wisdom and sympathy. Very much like playing upon a long forgotten instrument, was the relation between the maiden and the man—not only because he resembled such an instrument in the fact of belonging emotionally and intellectually to another generation, but also because his was a heart whose true music had long been silent, unheard by the world. Undoubtedly the maiden meant no harm, but she caused a great deal of pain, for at a later day, becoming a great lady of society, she forgot all about this old friend-

ship, or perhaps wondered why she ever wasted her time in talking to such a strange old-fashioned professor. Then the affectionate heart is condemned to silence again, to silence and oblivion, like the harp thrown away in some garret to be covered with cobwebs and visited only by bats. "Is it not time," the old man thinks, "that the strings should be broken, the strings of the heart? Let the cold wind of death now come and snap them." Yet, after all, why should he complain? Did he not have the beautiful experience of loving, and was she not in that time at least well worthy of the love that she called forth like music?

There are several other poems referring to what would seem to be the same experience, and all are beautiful, but one seems to me nobler than the rest, expressing as it does a generous resignation. It is called "Deteriora," a Latin word signifying lesser, inferior, or deteriorated things—not easy to translate. Nor would you find the poem easy to understand, referring as it does to conditions of society foreign to anything in Japanese experience. But some verses which I may quote you will like.

If fate and nature screen from me
  The sovran face I bowed before,
And set the glorious creature free,
  Whom I would clasp, detain, adore,—
If I forego that strange delight,
  Must all be lost? Not quite, not quite.

Die, Little Love, without complaint,
  Whom honour standeth by to shrive:
Assoilèd from all selfish taint,
  Die, Love, whom Friendship will survive.
Not hate nor folly gave thee birth;
  And briefness doth but raise thy worth.

This is the same thought which Tennyson expressed in his famous lines,

'Tis better to have loved and lost
  Than never to have loved at all.

But it is still more finely expressed to meet a particular personal mood. One must not think the world lost because a woman has been lost, he says, and such a love is not a thing for any man to be ashamed of, in spite of the fact that it has been disappointed. It was honourable, unselfish, not inspired by any passion or any folly, and the very brevity of the experience only serves to make it more precious. Observe the use of the words "shrive" and "assoiled." These refer to the old religious custom of confession; to "shrive" signifies to forgive, to free from sin, as a priest is supposed to do, and "assoiled" means "purified."

If this was a personal experience, it must have been an experience of advanced life. Elsewhere the story of a boyish love is told very prettily, under the title of "Two Fragments of Childhood." This is the first fragment:

When these locks were yellow as gold,
When past days were easily told,
Well I knew the voice of the sea,
Once he spake as a friend to me.
Thunder-rollings carelessly heard,
Once that poor little heart they stirred,
  Why, Oh, why?
  Memory, memory?
She that I wished to be with was by.

Sick was I in those misanthrope days
Of soft caresses, womanly ways;
Once that maid on the stair I met
Lip on brow she suddenly set.
Then flushed up my chivalrous blood,
Like Swiss streams in a mid-summer flood.
  Then, Oh, then,
  Imogen, Imogen!
Hadst thou a lover, whose years were ten.

This is evidently the charming memory of a little sick

boy sent to the seaside for his health, according to the English custom, and unhappy there, unable to play about like stronger children, and obliged to remain under the constant care of nurses and female relatives. But in the same house there is another family with a beautiful young daughter, probably sixteen or eighteen years old. The little boy wishes, wishes so much that the beautiful lady would speak to him and play with him, but he is shy, afraid to approach her—only looks at her with great admiring loving eyes. But one day she meets him on the stairs, and stoops down and kisses him on the forehead. Then he is in Heaven. Afterward no doubt she played with him, and they walked up and down by the shore of the sea together, and now, though an old man, whenever he hears the roar of the sea he remembers the beautiful lady who played with him and caressed him, when he was a little sick child. How much he loved her! But she was a woman, and he was only ten years old. The reference to "chivalrous blood" signifies just this, that at the moment when she kissed him he would have given his life for her, would have dared anything or done anything to show his devotion to her. No prettier memory of a child could be told.

We can learn a good deal about even the shyest of the poets through a close understanding of his poetry. From the foregoing we know that Cory must have been a sickly child; and from other poems referring to school life we cannot escape the supposition that he was not a strong lad. In one of his verses he speaks of being unable to join in the hearty play of his comrades; and in the poem which touches on the life of the mature man we find him acknowledging that he believed his life a failure—a failure through want of strength. I am going to quote this poem for other reasons. It is a beautiful address either to some favourite student or to a beloved son—it is impossible to decide which. But that does not matter. The title is "A New Year's Day."

Our planet runs through liquid space,
And sweeps us with her in the race
And wrinkles gather on my face,
  And Hebe bloom on thine:
Our sun with his encircling spheres
Around the central sun careers;
And unto thee with mustering years
  Comes hope which I resign.

'Twere sweet for me to keep thee still
Reclining half way up the hill;
But time will not obey the will,
  And onward thou must climb:
'Twere sweet to pause on this descent,
To wait for thee and pitch my tent,
But march I must with shoulders bent,
  Yet further from my prime.

I shall not tread thy battlefield
Nor see the blazon on thy shield;
Take thou the sword I could not wield,
  And leave me, and forget,
Be fairer, braver, more admired;
To win what feeble hearts desired;
Then leave thine arms, when thou art tired,
  To some one nobler yet.

How beautiful this is, and how profoundly sad!

I shall return to the personal poetry of Cory later on, but I want now to give you some examples of his Greek work. Perhaps the best of this is little more than a rendering of Greek into English; some of the work is pure translation. But it is the translation of a very great master, the perfect rendering of Greek feeling as well as of Greek thought. Here is an example of pure translation:

They told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead,
They brought me bitter music to hear and bitter tears to shed
I wept as I remembered how often you and I
Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.

And now that thou art lying, my dear Carian guest,
A handful of grey ashes, long, long ago at rest,
Still art thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales awake;
For Death, he taketh all away, but them he cannot take.

What are "thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales"? They are the songs which the dear dead poet made, still sung in his native country, though his body was burned to ashes long ago—has been changed into a mere handful of grey ashes, which, doubtless, have been placed in an urn, as is done with such ashes today in Japan. Death takes away all things from man, but not his poems, his songs, the beautiful thoughts which he puts into musical verse. These will always be heard like nightingales. The fourth line in the first stanza contains an idiom which may not be familiar to you. It means only that the two friends talked all day until the sun set in the west, and still talked on after that. Tennyson has used the same Greek thought in a verse of his poem, "A Dream of Fair Women," where Cleopatra says

"We drank the Lybian sun to sleep."

The Greek author of the above poem was the great poet Callimachus, and the English translator does not think it necessary even to give the name, as he wrote only for folk well acquainted with the classics. He has another short translation which he accompanies with the original Greek text; it is very pretty, but of an entirely different kind, a kind that may remind you of some Japanese poems. It is only about a cicada and a peasant girl, and perhaps it is twenty-four or twenty-five hundred years old. A dry cicada chirps to a lass making hay.

"Why creakest thou, Tithonus?"
Quoth she.
"I don't play;
It doubles my toil, your importunate lay,
I've earned a sweet pillow, lo! Herper is nigh;

I clasp a good wisp and in fragrance I lie;
But thou art unwearied, and empty, and dry."

How very human this little thing is—how actually it brings before us the figure of the girl, who must have become dust some time between two and three thousand years ago! She is working hard in the field, and the constant singing of the insect prompts her to make a comical protest. "Oh, Tithonus, what are you making that creaking noise for? You old dry thing, I have no time to play with you, or to idle in any way, but you do nothing but complain. Why don't you work, as I do? Soon I shall have leave to sleep, because I have worked well. There is the evening star, and I shall have a good bed of hay, sweet-smelling fresh hay, to lie upon. How well I shall sleep. But you, you idle noisy thing, you do not deserve to sleep. You have done nothing to tire you. And you are empty, dry and thirsty. Serves you right!" Of course you recognize the allusion to the story of Tithonus, so beautifully told by Tennyson. The girl's jest has a double meaning. The word "importunate" has the signification of a wearisome repetition of a request, a constant asking, impossible to satisfy. Tithonus was supposed to complain because he was obliged to live although he wanted to die. That young girl does not want to die at all. And she says that the noise of the insect supposed to repeat the complaint of Tithonus, only makes it more tiresome for her to work. She was feeling, no doubt, much as a Japanese student would feel when troubled by the singing of *semi* on some very hot afternoon while he is trying to master some difficult problem.

That is pure Greek—pure as another mingling of the Greek feeling with the modern scholarly spirit, entitled "An Invocation." Before quoting from it I must explain somewhat; otherwise you might not be able to imagine what it means, because it was written to be read by those only who are acquainted with Theocritus and the Greek

idylists. Perhaps I had better say something too, about the word idyl, for the use of the word by Tennyson is not the Greek use at all, except in the mere fact that the word signifies a picturing, a shadowing or an imaging of things. Tennyson's pictures are of a purely imaginative kind in the "Idyls of the King." But the Greek poets who first invented the poetry called idyllic did not attempt the heroic works of imagination at all; they only endeavoured to make perfectly true pictures of the common life of peasants in the country. They wrote about the young men and young girls working on the farms, about the way they quarrelled or rejoiced or made love, about their dances and their songs, about their religious festivals and their sacrifices to the gods at the parish temple. Imagine a Japanese scholar of today who, after leaving the university, instead of busying himself with the fashionable studies of the time, should go out into the remoter districts or islands of Japan, and devote his life to studying the existence of the commoner people there, and making poems about it. This was exactly what the Greek idylists did,—that is, the best of them. They were great scholars and became friends of kings, but they wrote poetry chiefly about peasant life, and they gave all their genius to the work. The result was so beautiful that everybody is still charmed by the pictures or idyls which they made.

Well, after this disgression, to return to the subject of Theocritus, the greatest of the idylists. He has often introduced into his idyls the name of Comatas. Who was Comatas? Comatas was a Greek shepherd boy, or more strictly speaking a goatherd, who kept the flocks of a rich man. It was his duty to sacrifice to the gods none of his master's animals, without permission; but as his master was a very avaricious person, Comatas knew that it would be of little use to ask him. Now this Comatas was a very good singer of peasant songs, and he made many beautiful poems for the people to sing, and he believed that it was

the gods who had given him power to make the songs, and the Muses had inspired him with the capacity to make good verse. In spite of his master's will, Comatas therefore thought it was not very bad to take the young kids and sacrifice to the gods and the Muses. When his master found out what had been done with the animals, naturally he became very angry, and he put Comatas into a great box of cedar-wood in order to starve him to death—saying, as he closed and locked the lid, "Now, Comatas, let us see whether the gods will feed you!" In that box Comatas was left for a year without food or drink, and when the master, at the end of the year, opened the box, he expected to find nothing but the bones of the goatherd. But Comatas was alive and well, singing sweet songs, because during the year the muses had sent bees to feed him with honey. The bees had been able to enter the box through a very little hole. I suppose you know that bees were held sacred to the muses, and that there is in Greek legend a symbolic relation between bees and poetry.

If you want to know what kind of songs Comatas sang and what kind of life he represented, you will find all this exquisitely told by Theocritus; and there is a beautiful little translation in prose of Theocritus, Bion and Moschus, made by Andrew Lang, which should delight you to read. Another day I shall give you examples of such translations. Then you will see what true idyllic poetry originally signified. These Greeks, although trained scholars and philosophers, understood not only that human nature in itself is a beautiful thing, but also that the best way to study human nature is to study the life of the peasants and the common people. It is not to the rich and leisurely, not to rank and society, that a poet must go for inspiration. He will not find it there. What is called society is a world in which nobody is happy, and in which pure human nature is afraid to show itself. Life among the higher classes in all countries is formal, artificial, theatrical; poetry is not

there. Of course no kind of human community is perfectly happy, but it is among the simple folk, the country folk, who do not know much about evil and deceit, that the greater proportion of happiness can be found. Among the youths of the country especially, combining the charm of childhood with the strength of adult maturity, the best possible subjects for fine pure studies of human nature can be found. May I not here express the hope that some young Japanese poet, some graduate of this very university, will eventually attempt to do in Japan what Theocritus and Bion did in ancient Sicily? A great deal of the very same kind of poetry exists in our own rural districts, and parallels can be found in the daily life of the Japanese peasants for everything beautifully described in Theocritus. At all events I am quite sure of one thing, that no great new literature can possibly arise in this country until some scholarly minds discover that the real force and truth and beauty and poetry of life is to be found only in studies of the common people—not in the life of the rich and the noble, not in the shadowy life of books.

Well, our English poet felt with the Greek idylists, and in the poem called "An Invocation" he beautifully expresses this sympathy. All of us, he says, should like to see and hear something of the ancient past if it were possible. We should like, some of us, to call back the vanished gods and goddesses of the beautiful Greek world, or to talk to the great souls of that world who had the experience of life as men—to Socrates, for example, to Plato, to Phidias the sculptor, to Pericles the statesman. But, as a poet, my wish would not be for the return of the old gods nor of the old heroes so much as for the return to us of some common men who lived in the Greek world. It is Comatas, he says, that he would most like to see, and to see in some English park—in the neighbourhood of Cambridge University, or of Eton College. And thus he addresses the spirit of Comatas:

O dear divine Comatas, I would that thou and I
Beneath this broken sunlight this leisure day might lie;
Where trees from distant forests, whose names were strange to thee,
Should bend their amorous branches within thy reach to be,
And flowers thine Hellas knew not, which art hath made more fair,
Should shed their shining petals upon thy fragrant hair.
Then thou shouldst calmly listen with ever changing looks,
To songs of younger minstrels and plots of modern books,
And wonder at the daring of poets later born—
Whose thoughts are unto thy thoughts as noontide is to morn.
And little should thou grudge them their greater strength of soul,
Thy partners in the torch race, though nearer to the goal.

. . . . . .

Or in thy cedarn prison thou waitest for the bee;
Ah, leave that simple honey and take thy food from me.
My sun is stooping westward. Entranced dreamer, haste;
There's fruitage in my garden that I would have thee taste.
Now lift the lid a moment; now, Dorian shepherd, speak.
Two minds shall flow together, the English and the Greek.

A few phrases of these beautiful stanzas need explanation. "Broken sunlight" refers, of course, to the imperfect shade thrown by the trees under which the poet is lying. The shadow is broken by the light passing through leaves, or conversely, the light is broken by the interposition of the leaves. The reference to trees from distant forests no doubt intimates that the poet is in some botanical garden, a private park, in which foreign trees are carefully cultivated. The "torch race" is a simile for the pursuit of knowledge and truth. Greek thinkers compare the transmission of knowledge from one generation to another, to the passing of a lighted torch from hand to hand, as in the case of messengers carrying signals or athletes running a mighty race. As a runner runs until he is tired, or until he reaches the next station, and then passes the torch which he has been carrying to another runner waiting to receive it, so does each generation pass on its wisdom to the succeeding generation, and disappear. "My sun is stooping westward" is only a beautiful way of saying, "I am becoming very old;

be quick, so that we may see each other before I die." And the poet suggests that it is because of his age and his experience and his wisdom that he could hope to be of service to the dear divine Comatas. The expression, "there is fruitage in my garden," refers to no material garden, but to the cultivated mind of the scholar; he is only saying, "I have strange knowledge that I should like to impart to you." How delightful, indeed, it would be, could some university scholar really converse with a living Greek of the old days!

There is another little Greek study of great and simple beauty entitled "The Daughter of Cleomenes." It is only an historical incident, but it is so related for the pleasure of suggesting a profound truth about the instinct of childhood. Long ago, when the Persians were about to make an attack upon the Greeks, there was an attempt to buy off the Spartan resistance, and the messenger to the Spartan general found him playing with his little daughter, a child of six or seven. The conference was carried on in whispers, and the child could not hear what was being said; but she broke up the whole plot by a single word. I shall quote a few lines from the close of the poem, which contain its moral lessons. The emissary has tried to tempt him with promises of wealth and power. He falters, wavers—

> The roads he cannot measure;
> But rates full high the gleam of spears,
> And dreams of yellow treasure.
> He listens; he is yielding now;
> Outspoke the fearless child:
> "Oh, Father, come away, lest thou
> Be by this man beguiled."
> Her lowly judgment barred the plea,
> So low, it could not reach her.
> *The man knows more of land and sea,*
> *But she's the truer teacher.*

All the little girl could know about the matter was instinctive; she only saw the cunning face of the stranger,

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and felt sure that he was trying to deceive her father for a bad purpose—so she cried out, "Father come away with me, or else that man will deceive you." And she spoke truth, as her father immediately recognized.

There are several more classical studies of extraordinary beauty; but your interest in them would depend upon something more than interest in Greek and Roman history, and we can not study all the poems. So I prefer to go back to the meditative lyrics, and to give a few splendid examples of these more personal compositions. The following stanzas are from a poem whose Latin title signifies that Love conquers death. In this poem the author becomes the equal of Tennyson as a master of language.

The plunging rocks, whose ravenous throats
  The sea in wrath and mockery fills,
The smoke that up the valley floats,
  The girlhood of the growing hills;

The thunderings from the miners' ledge,
  The wild assaults on Nature's hoards,
The peak that stormward bares an edge
  Ground sharp in days when Titans warred;

Grim heights, by wandering clouds embraced,
  Where lightning's ministers conspire,
Grey glens, with tarns and streamlets laced,
  Stark forgeries of primeval fire.

These scenes may gladden many a mind,
  Awhile from homelier thoughts released,
And here my fellow men may find
  A Sabbath and a vision-feast.

I bless them in the good they feel;
  And yet I bless them with a sigh;
On me this grandeur stamps the seal
  Of tyrannous mortality.

The pitiless mountain stands so sure,
  The human breast so weakly heaves,

That brains decay while rocks endure,—
At this the insatiate spirit grieves.

But hither, Oh, ideal bride!
For whom this heart in silence aches,
Love is unwearied as the tide,
Love is perennial as the lakes.

Come thou. The spiky crags will seem
One harvest of one heavenly year,
And fear of death, like childish dream,
Will pass and flee, when thou art here.

Very possibly this charming meditation was written on the Welsh coast; there is just such scenery as the poem describes, and the grand peak of Snowdon would well realize the imagination of the line about the girlhood of the growing hills. The melancholy of the latter part of the composition is the same melancholy to be found in "Mimnermus in Church," the first of Cory's poems which we read together. It is the Greek teaching that there is nothing to console us for the great doubt and mystery of existence except unselfish affection. All through the book we find the same philosophy, even in the beautiful studies of student life and the memories of childhood. So it is quite a melancholy book, though the sadness be beautiful. I have given you examples of the sadness of doubt and of the sadness of love; but there is yet a third kind of sadness —the sadness of a childless man, wishing that he could have a child of his own. It is a very pretty thing, simply entitled "Scheveningen Avenue"—probably the name of the avenue where the incident occurred. The poet does not tell us how it occurred, but we can very well guess. He was riding in a street car, probably, and a little girl next to him, while sitting upon her nurse's lap, fell asleep, and as she slept let her head fall upon his shoulder. This is a very simple thing to make a poem about, but what a poem it is!

Oh, that the road were longer
A mile, or two, or three!
So might the thought grow stronger
That flows from touch of thee.

Oh, little slumbering maid,
If thou wert five years older,
Thine head would not be laid
So simply on my shoulder!

Oh, would that I were younger,
Oh, were I more like thee,
I should not faintly hunger
For love that cannot be.

A girl might be caressed
Beside me freely sitting;
A child on knee might rest,
And not like thee, unwitting.

Such honour is thy mother's,
Who smileth on thy sleep,
Or for the nurse who smothers
Thy cheek in kisses deep.

And but for parting day,
And but for forest shady
From me they'd take away
The burden of their lady.

Ah thus to feel thee leaning
Above the nursemaid's hand,
Is like a stranger's gleaning
Where rich men own the land.

Chance gains, and humble thrift,
With shyness much like thieving,
No notice with the gift,
No thanks with thee receiving.

Oh peasant, when thou starvest
Outside thy fair domain,

Imagine there's a harvest
In every treasured grain!

Make with thy thoughts high cheer,
Say grace for others dining,
And keep thy pittance clear
From poison of repining.

There is an almost intolerable acuity of sadness in the last two mocking verses, but how pretty and how tender the whole thing is, and how gentle-hearted must have been the man who wrote it! The same tenderness reappears in references to children of a larger growth, the boys of his school. Sometimes he very much regrets the necessity of discipline, and advocates a wiser method of dealing with the young. How very pretty is this little verse about the boy he loves.

Sweet eyes, that aim a level shaft,
At pleasure flying from afar,
Sweet lips, just parted for a draught
Of Hebe's nectar, shall I mar
By stress of disciplinal craft
The joys that in your freedom are?

But a little reflection further on in the same poem reminds us how necessary the discipline must be for the battle of life, inasmuch as each of those charming boys will have to fight against evil—

yet shall ye cope
With worldling wrapped in silken lies,
With pedant, hypocrite and pope.

One might easily lecture about this little volume for many more days, so beautiful are the things which fill it. But enough has been cited to exemplify its unique value. If you reread these quotations, I think you will find each time new beauty in them. And the beauty is quite peculiar. Such poetry could have been written only under two con-

ditions. The first is that the poet be a consummate scholar. The second is that he must have suffered as only a great mind and heart could suffer, from want of affection.

CHAPTER XXIII

OLD GREEK FRAGMENTS

The other day when we were reading some of the poems in "Ionica," I promised to speak in another short essay of Theocritus and his songs or idyls of Greek peasant life, but in speaking of him it will be well also to speak of others who equally illustrate the fact that everywhere there is truth and beauty for the mind that can see. I spoke last week about what I thought the highest possible kind of literary art might become. But the possible becoming is yet far away; and in speaking of some old Greek writers I want only to emphasize the fact that modern literary art as well as ancient literary art produced their best results from a close study of human nature.

Although Theocritus and others who wrote idyls found their chief inspiration in the life of the peasants, they sometimes also wrote about the life of cities. Human nature may be studied in the city as well as in the country, provided that a man knows how to look for it. It is not in the courts of princes nor the houses of nobles nor the residences of the wealthy that such study can be made. These superior classes have found it necessary to show themselves to the world very cautiously; they live by rule, they conceal their emotions, they move theatrically. But the ordinary, everyday people of cities are very different; they speak their thoughts, they keep their hearts open, and they let us see, just as children do, the good or the evil side of their characters. So a good poet and a good observer can find in the life of cities subjects of study almost as easily as in the country. Theocritus has done this in his fifteenth idyl. This idyl is very famous, and it has been translated hundreds of times into various languages. Perhaps you

may have seen one version of it which was made by Matthew Arnold. But I think that the version made by Lang is even better.

The scene is laid in Alexandria, probably some two thousand years ago, and the occasion is a religious holiday—a *matsuri*, as we call it in Japan. Two women have made an appointment to go together to the temple, to see the festival and to see the people. The poet begins his study by introducing us to the chamber of one of the women.

GORO. "Is Praxinoe at home?"

PRAXINOE. "Dear Gorgo, how long is it since you have been here! She is at home. The wonder is that you have got here at last! Eunoe, come and see that she has a chair and put a cushion on it!"

G. "It does most charmingly as it is."

P. "Do sit down."

How natural this is. There is nothing Greek about it any more than there is Japanese; it is simply human. It is something that happens in Tokyo every day, certainly in houses where there are chairs and where it is a custom to put a cushion on the chair for the visitor. But remember, this was two thousand years ago. Now listen to what the visitor has to say.

"I have scarcely got to you at all, Praxinoe! What a huge crowd, what hosts of carriages! Everywhere cavalry boots, everywhere men in uniform! And the road is endless; yes, you really live too far away!"

Praxinoe answers:

"It is all for that mad man of mine. Here he came to the ends of the earth and took a hall, not a house, and all that we might not be neighbours. The jealous wretch, always the same, ever for spite."

She is speaking half in jest, half in earnest; but she forgets that her little boy is present, and the visitor reminds her of the fact:

"Don't talk of your husband like that, my dear girl, be-

fore the little boy,—look how he is staring at you!—Never mind, Zaphyrion, sweet child, she is not speaking about papa."

P. "Our Lady! (Persephone) The child takes notice!"

Then the visitor to comfort the child says "Nice papa," and the conversation proceeds. The two talk about their husbands, about their dresses, about the cost of things in the shops; but in order to see the festival Praxinoe must dress herself quickly, and woman, two thousand years ago, just as now, takes a long time to dress. Hear Praxinoe talking to her maid-servant while she hurries to get ready:

"Eunoe, bring the water and put it down in the middle of the room,—lazy creature that you are. Cat-like, always trying to sleep soft! Come, bustle, bring the water; quicker! I want water first,—and how she carries it! Give it me all the same;—don't pour out so much, you extravagant thing! Stupid girl! Why are you wetting my dress? There, stop, I have washed my hands as heaven would have it. Where is the key of the big chest? Bring it here."

This is life, natural and true; we can see those three together, the girlish young wife hurrying and scolding and chattering naturally and half childishly, the patient servant girl smiling at the hurry of her mistress, and the visitor looking at her friend's new dress, wondering how much it cost and presently asking her the price. At last all is ready. But the little boy sees his mother go out and he wants to go out too, though it has been decided not to take him, because the crowd is too rough and he might be hurt. Here the mother first explains, then speaks firmly:

"No, child, I don't mean to take you. Boo! Bogies! There is a horse that bites! Cry as much as you please, but I cannot have you maimed."

They go out, Praxinoe and Gorgo and the maid-servant Eunoe. The crowd is tremendous, and they find it very hard to advance. Sometimes there are horses in the way,

sometimes wagons, occasionally a legion of cavalry. We know all this, because we hear the chatter of the women as they make their way through the press.

"Give me your hand, and you, Eunoe, catch hold of Eutychis,—for fear lest you get lost. . . . Here come the kings on horses! My dear man, don't trample on me. Eunoe, you fool-hardy girl, will you never keep out of the way? Oh! How tiresome, Gorgo, my muslin veil is torn in two already. . . . For heaven's sake, sir, if you ever wish to be fortunate, take care of my shawl!"

STRANGER. "I can hardly help myself, but for all that I will be as helpful as I can."

The strange man helps the women and children through the pushing crowd, and they thank him very prettily, praying that he may have good fortune all his life. But not all the strangers who come in contact with them happen to be so kind. They come at last into that part of the temple ground where the image of Adonis is displayed; the beauty of the statue moves them, and they utter exclamations of delight. This does not please some of the male spectators, one of whom exclaims, "You tiresome women, do cease your endless cooing talk! They bore one to death with their eternal broad vowels!"

They are country women, and their critic is probably a purist—somebody who has studied Greek as it is pronounced and spoken in Athens. But the women bravely resent this interference with their rights.

GORGO. "Indeed! And where may this person come from? What is it to you if we are chatterboxes? Give orders to your own servants, sir. Do you pretend to command the ladies of Syracuse? If you must know, we are Corinthians by descent, like Bellerophon himself, and we speak Peloponnesian. Dorian women may lawfully speak Doric, I presume."

This is enough to silence the critic, but the other young woman also turns upon him, and we may suppose that

he is glad to escape from their tongues. And then everybody becomes silent, for the religious services begin. The priestess, a comely girl, chants the psalm of Adonis, the beautiful old pagan hymn, more beautiful and more sensuous than anything uttered by the later religious poets of the West; and all listen in delighted stillness. As the hymn ends, Gorgo bursts out in exclamation of praise:

"Praxinoe! The woman is cleverer than we fancied! Happy woman to know so much!—Thrice happy to have so sweet a voice! Well, all the same, it is time to be making for home; Diocleides has not had his dinner, and the man is all vinegar,—don't venture near him when he is kept waiting for dinner. Farewell, beloved Adonis—may you find us glad at your next coming."

And with this natural mingling of the sentimental and the commonplace the little composition ends. It is as though we were looking through some window into the life of two thousand years ago. Read the whole thing over to yourselves when you have time to find the book in the library, and see how true to human nature it is. There is nothing in it except the wonderful hymn, which does not belong to today as much as to the long ago, to modern Tokyo as much as to ancient Greece. That is what makes the immortality of any literary production—not simply truth to the life of one time, but truth to the life of every time and place.

Not many years ago there was discovered a book by Herodas, a Greek writer of about the same period. It is called the "Mimes," a series of little dramatic studies picturing the life of the time. One of these is well worthy of rank with the idyl of Theocritus above mentioned. It is the study of a conversation between a young woman and an old woman. The young woman has a husband, who left her to join a military expedition and has not been heard of for several years. The old woman is a go-between, and she comes to see the young person on behalf of another

young man, who admires her. But as soon as she states the nature of her errand, the young lady becomes very angry and feigns much virtuous indignation. There is a quarrel. Then the two become friends, and we know that the old woman's coming is likely to bring about the result desired. Now the wonder of this little study also is the play of emotion which it reveals. Such emotions are common to all ages of humanity; we feel the freshness of this reflection as we read, to such a degree that we cannot think of the matter as having happened long ago. Yet even the city in which these episodes took place has vanished from the face of the earth.

In the case of the studies of peasant life, there is also value of another kind. Here we have not only studies of human nature, but studies of particular social conditions. The quarrels of peasants, half good natured and nearly always happily ending; their account of their sorrows; their gossip about their work in the fields—all this might happen almost anywhere and at almost any time. But the song contest, the prize given for the best composition upon a chosen subject, this is particularly Greek, and has never perhaps existed outside of some place among the peasant folk. It was the poetical side of this Greek life of the peasants, as recorded by Theocritus, which so much influenced the literatures of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in France and in England. But neither in France nor in England has there ever really been at any time, any life resembling that portrayed by Theocritus; today nothing appears to us more absurd than the eighteenth century habit of picturing the Greek shepherd life in English or French landscapes. What really may have existed among the shepherds of the antique world could not possibly exist in modern times. But how pretty it is! I think that the tenth idyl of Theocritus is perhaps the prettiest example of the whole series, thirty in number, which have been preserved for us. The plan is of the simplest. Two young peasants, respectively

named Battus and Milon, meeting together in the field, talk about their sweethearts. One of them works lazily and is jeered by the other in consequence. The subject of the jeering acknowledges that he works badly because his mind is disturbed—he has fallen in love. Then the other expresses sympathy for him, and tells him that the best thing he can do to cheer himself up will be to make a song about the girl, and to sing it as he works. Then he makes a song, which has been the admiration of the world for twenty centuries and has been translated into almost every language possessing a literature.

"They call thee gipsy, gracious Bombica, and lean, and sunburnt;—'tis only I that call thee honey-pale.

Yea, and the violet is swart and swart the lettered Hyacinth; but yet these flowers are chosen the first in garlands.

The goat runs after cytisus, the wolf pursues the goat, the crane follows the plough,—but I am wild for love of thee.

Would it were mine, all the wealth whereof Croesus was lord, as men tell! Then images of us, all in gold, should be dedicated to Aphrodite, thou with thy flute and a rose, yea, or an apple, and I in fair attire and new shoon of Amyclae on both my feet.

Ah, gracious Bombica, thy feet are like carven ivory, thy voice is drowsy sweet, and thy ways—I can not tell of them."

Even through the disguise of an English prose translation, you will see how pretty and how simple this little song must have been in the Greek, and how very natural is the language of it. Our young peasant has fallen in love with the girl who is employed to play the flute for the reapers, as the peasants like to work to the sound of music. His comrades do not much admire Bombica; one calls her "a long grasshopper of a girl"; another finds her too thin; a third calls her a gipsy, such a dark brown her skin has become

by constant exposure to the summer sun. And the lover, looking at her, is obliged to acknowledge in his own mind that she is long and lean and dark and like a gipsy; but he finds beauty in all these characteristics, nevertheless. What if she is dark? The sweetest honey is darkish, like amber, and so are beautiful flowers, the best of all flowers, flowers given to Aphrodite; and the sacred hyacinth on whose leaves appear the letters of the word of lamentation "Ai! Ai!"—that is also dark like Bombica. Her darkness is that of honey and flowers. What a charming apology! He cannot deny that she is long and lean, and he remains silent on these points, but here we must all sympathize with him. He shows good taste. It is the tall slender girl that is really the most beautiful and the most graceful, not the large-limbed, strong-bodied peasant type that his companions would prefer. Without knowing it, he has fallen in love like an artist. And he is not blind to the grace of slenderness and of form, though he cannot express it in artistic language. He can only compare the shape of the girl's feet to the ivory feet of the divinities in the temples—perhaps he is thinking of some ivory image of Aphrodite which he has seen. But how charming an image does he make to arise before us! Beautiful is the description of the girl's voice as "drowsy sweet." But the most exquisite thing in the whole song is the final despairing admission that he cannot describe her at all—"and thy ways, I cannot tell of them"! This is one of the most beautiful expressions in any poem ancient or modern, because of its supreme truth. What mortal ever could describe the charm of manner, voice, smile, address, in mere words? Such things are felt, they cannot be described; and the peasant boy reaches the highest height of true lyrical poetry when he cries out "I cannot tell of them." The great French critic Sainte-Beuve attempted to render this line as follows—"*Quant à la manière, je ne puis la rendre!*" This is very good; and you can take your choice between it and any English transla-

tion. But good judges say that nothing in English or French equals the charm of the original.

You will find three different classes of idyls in Theocritus; the idyl which is a simple song of peasant life, a pure lyric expressing only a single emotion; the idyl which is a little story, usually a story about the gods or heroes; and lastly, the idyl which is presented in the form of a dialogue, or even of a conversation between three or four persons. All these forms of idyl, but especially the first and the third, were afterward beautifully imitated by the Roman poets; then very imperfectly imitated by modern poets. The imitation still goes on, but the very best English poets have never really been able to give us anything worthy of Theocritus himself.

However, this study of the Greek model has given some terms to English literature which every student ought to know. One of these terms is amœbæan,—amœbæan poetry being dialogue poetry composed in the form of question and reply. The original Greek signification was that of alternate speaking. Please do not forget the word. You may often find it in critical studies in essays upon contemporary literature; and when you see it again, remember Theocritus and the school of Greek poets who first introduced the charm of amœbæan poetry. I hope that this little lecture will interest some of you in Theocritus sufficiently to induce you to read him carefully through and through. But remember that you cannot get the value of even a single poem of his at a single reading. We have become so much accustomed to conventional forms of literature that the simple art of poetry like this quite escapes us at first sight. We have to read it over and over again many times, and to think about it; then only we feel the wonderful charm.

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